

A photograph of a wooden table with a leather satchel, a piece of paper with a grid, and a metal object with rivets. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, brownish glow. The leather satchel is on the right, the paper with a grid is on the left, and the metal object with rivets is at the top. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

From the Home (Front): A Spatialisation of Epistolary Correspondence From

# World War One

1914-1918

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An Exegesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art and Design 2020.

**Attestation of Authorship:**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning

Signed:

Date: 9/07/2020

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## Abstract

This practice-led research thesis investigates epistolary correspondences from the front lines to explore the relationship between spatial belonging and dislocation with the concept of the home as a domestic interior that encompasses memory and recollection. The purpose of the research is to reconceptualise the current exhibition design of the Pou Kanohi towards a more a narrative-driven design strategy and exhibition for the Auckland Museum that portrays and focalises personal narratives of New Zealanders that served in World War One. The concepts in this project are explored through reading and analysing epistolary correspondence from during the war through making. These correspondence are written by Second Lieutenant Jack Stanley Pryce of the 1st Battalion Otago Infantry Regiment to his family back at home. The letters are a vital part of the research as they straddle the gap between the past(absence) and present(presence). The research is divided into three-parts- The Story, Method and Implementation into the site. The story is explored through making a series of dioramas using digital and analogue methods to analyse and spatialise moments of spatial dislocation. The method is the platform or medium that story is portrayed to the audience. The Implementation into the site is how the project is realised as an exhibition in the Pou Kanohi.

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## Introduction

On 4 August 1914, Britain declared war on Germany, summoning the British Empire into World War One. It was a call for duty on unfamiliar geolocations, yet many responded to the unknown experiences that waited for them on the battlefields, deserts, trenches and beaches in the hope of defending their allies and returning home. The war had a total casualty rate at around 40 million. The true number of deaths is unknown but is estimated to be between 15 to 21 million worldwide over four years. As witnessed in their letters, distance and the themes of the home were a common factor among the more than 100,000 New Zealanders who served overseas. Receiving and sending correspondence offered both soldiers and their families emotional sustenance and psychological consolation. But for every one of these individuals, the words, the phrases, the scent of the letters carried significance. Parcels would often contain a treat, offering relief from the monotonous rations issued. These parcels might contain warm clothing, tobacco, homemade cookies, cakes, photographs and other little gifts that provided individuals domestic comfort. Everything received in these parcels became tangible reminders of familial affection. These letters provided soldiers with an alternative that weren't the trenches or the sound of gunfire. They took the reader away from the front temporarily, enabling them to return home, mentally if not physically.

It has been over a century since World War One ended. All that remains of these absent individuals can be traced through objects they have left behind. Bloodstained or torn uniforms, diaries, shaving kits, sewing kits, identity disks, watches, metal cigarette cases, service records, hospital records, photographs and some personal correspondence and many other items, part of exhibitions and archives at museums across the world (Figure 1-2). Inspired by Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum's Documentary Heritage collections, I seek to re-imagine the letters written by New Zealanders who served in World War One, by taking them away from their traditional role as a document of events and reframing them within a spatially driven narrative exhibition that critically investigates the theme of home during a time of spatial dislocation.



Figure 1 : Prasad, S, Soldiers equipments and personal possessions in trench dugout, 2019. Auckland Museum Display Collections



Figure 2 : Prasad, S, Objects from Home being packed in container kit for those on the Frontlines, 2019  
Te Papa Museum Display Collection, Wellington.

Throughout this project, I am the outsider, the reader and someone with no family connection to World War One. I intend to explore this concept of home during the dislocation, by focussing on the letters and memories of Second Lieutenant Jack Stanley Pryce of the 1st Battalion Otago Infantry Regiment. I choose Pryce because he was the same age as me when he enlisted, therefore I was particularly interested in his point of view of home during the 1900s in relation to mine in the 2000s. The way Pryce describes in his letters the recreation of familiar domestic rituals on the battlefield using what he has at hand are specific. I find these moments interesting because they all portray the idea of “longing for home” but also create a juxtaposition between battlefield and domestic spaces (home). In this project, I will be making a series of dioramas using digital and analogue methods to analyse and spatialise moments of spatial dislocation (homes) in the letters written by Pryce to propose an exhibition design for Auckland Museum.

Philosopher Gaston Bachelard states “Distance often creates miniatures at all points on the horizon, and the dreamer faced with these spectacles of distant nature, picks out these miniatures as so many nests of solitude in which he dreams of living”<sup>1</sup>. The miniatures Bachelard is referring to in this context are psychological manifestations of home, and one’s ability to pick pockets of solitude (memories) and live within them in times of spatial dislocation by holding onto to the familiar whilst also longing for it, thus miniatures can take us back to the familiarity of spaces<sup>2</sup>. The diorama allows me to essentially frame these miniatures and memories as a physical construct.

This exegesis is structured into three main chapters. The first chapter, “To Open/ To Recollect.” introduces the key contexts that informed the development of my research inquiry. The second chapter, “To Read” outlines my approach to the project in terms of overarching methodologies and methods that were employed as core to this practice-lead investigation. The third chapter, “To Reply” reflects on the processes and discoveries I made throughout the thesis.

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1 Gaston Bachelard, M. Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe, *The Poetics of Space*, 1994 edition. ed. (Beacon Press, 1994).

2 Ibid.

**To Open/ To Recollect**  
*Unfolding the Memories of Past*

**Contextual Review**



### Jack Stanley Pryce

Jack Stanley Pryce (Figure 3) was born in England in 1892. Pryce was a dreamer who loved reading books, nature and most importantly his family (Figure 4). In 1902 Pryce's father passed away and his widowed mother Sarah married Thomas Chambers from Invercargill in the pursuit of financial security for her children. The family moved to New Zealand on 13 November 1911. On 12 July 1912, Thomas Chambers also passed away.

In 1914, a few days after war was declared, the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) was formed and offered to the Imperial Government. Jack Pryce was working at the Black Mount Station when war was declared. Pryce joined his regiment at the age of 22 alongside his two brothers Charlie and George. He was deployed to Gallipoli in June of 1915 and fought at Chunuk Bair in August. Posted to the Western Front in July of 1917, he survived the battles of Broodseinde and Passchendaele. As the war approached its final stages, Jack was the only brother remaining at the frontline the other two having been evacuated with wounds. In his letters home Pryce emphasises the different ways that domestic rituals and spaces were re-created during the war to create a sense of belonging. These letters are a vital context because they highlight the notion of domestic spaces being re-interpreted or re-imagined on the front lines.

Figure 3 : Prasad. S, - Scanned Image of Jack Stanley Pryce ,2019



Figure 4 : Prasad. S, - Scanned Image of Pryce family. Left to Right - George , Norman, Sarah, Florence, Jack and Edie Pryce.

25 August 1915

My dear mother,

.....It was strange spending my 23rd Birthday in the firing line. We have to cook for ourselves here, so I made some rissoles out of bully beef, onions and flour and fried them in bacon fat and also, I made a jam roly-poly. Just flour and water and jam, no baking powder or anything else. It was pretty heavy but not bad. For breakfast I grind up some biscuits and make porridge out of them. It's surprising what a man can do with very little. But oh! For some of your cooking once again. We sometimes sit and talk about what we would like and what we are going to ask for when we get back.....

All from your ever-loving son  
Jack<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> J. Pryce, T. McCormack, and A. Gibson, *Jack's Journey: A Soldier's Experience of the First World War* (Wellington, New Zealand: Glacier Press, 2017). Pg 47

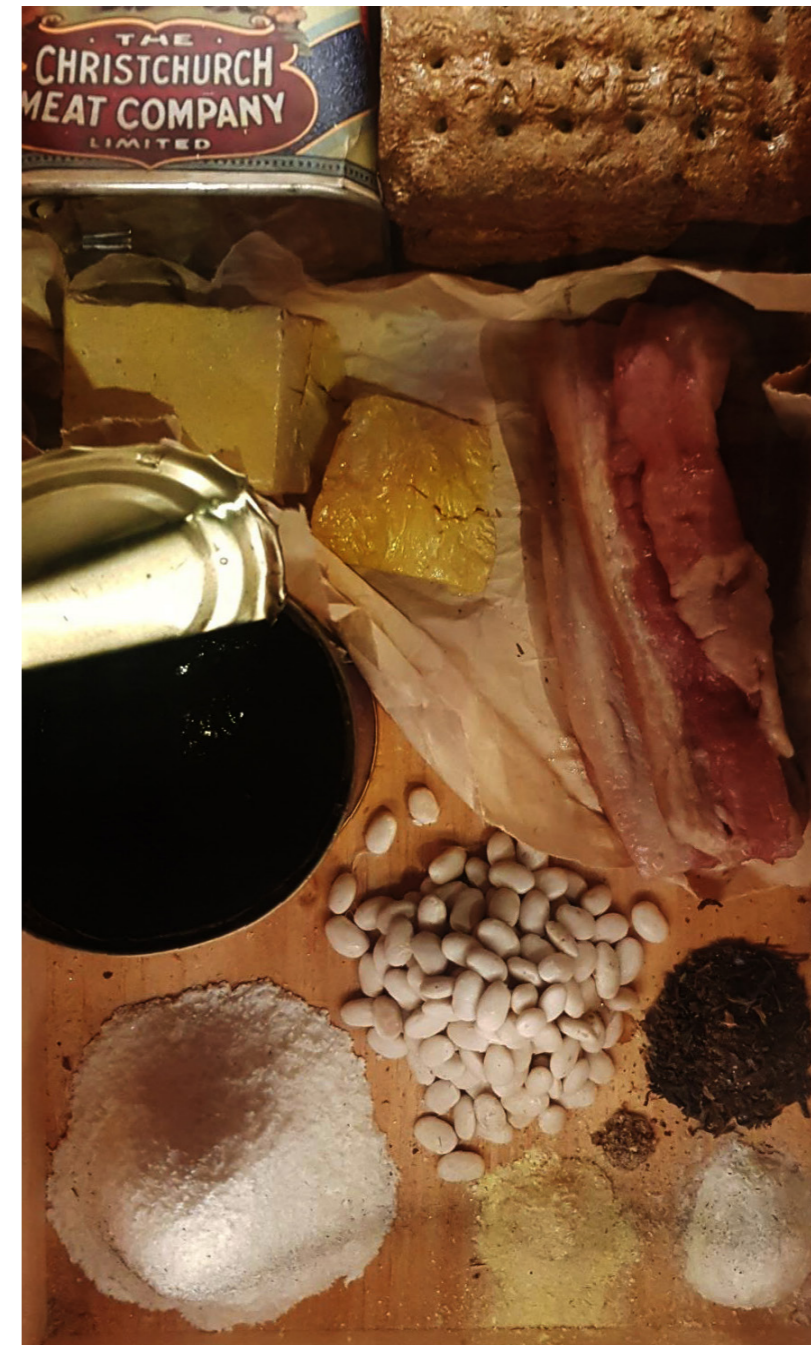


Figure 5 : Prasad, S,  
Soldier's food rations 2019.  
Te Papa Museum Wellington.

## Spatial Dislocations and Home

*“Homes becomes powerful when it becomes both a destination and a desire, especially when left behind. The story about home is a story about the journey of trying to get there”<sup>4</sup>.*

In the context of Pryce’s journey, the idea of home is attached to spatial belonging. Spatial belonging is attaching the self to a place either through bodily experiences or psychological imagery (memories) to establish a sense of belonging through the act of recollection. Pryce holds onto home and finds a sense of belonging and comfort within the nostalgia of the photographs, letters, newspapers and memories that are shared with him. By holding on, he attempts to recreate some of the comforting domestic spaces he had left behind. This longing for home is further exacerbated by the inhospitable conditions on the front.

France

3.6.18

*My dear mother,*

*..... I have been busy this last two days building a dug-out myself. It is nearly finished now and looks all right. It is about 6ft. square and 4ft high. The walls are lined with sandbags and for a carpet I have got a piece of sacking. There is a fireplace in one corner and a table in another. Along the other side I have fixed up a bed. The table is made from four pieces of wood with the top of an ammunition box nailed on and makes a first-rate writing desk. The bed consists of an old weather worn stretcher that looks as though it had carried good many wounded in its time.....<sup>5</sup>*

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4 Susan Stanford Friedman, “Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 23, no. 2 (2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/20455187>.

5 J. Pryce, T. McCormack, and A. Gibson, *Jack’s Journey: A Soldier’s Experience of the First World War* (Wellington, New Zealand: Glacier Press, 2017). Pg 178-179

According to Sara Ahmed;

*“Home is here, not a particular place that one inhabits, but more than one place: there are too many homes to allow a place to secure the roots or routes of one’s destination. It is not simply that that subject does not belong anywhere. The journey between homes provides the subject with the contours of a space of belonging, but space which expresses the very logic of an interval, the passing through of the subject between apparently fixed moments of departure and arrival”<sup>6</sup>.*

This suggests that the constant shifting of spatial habitats becomes a process of disorientation and reorientation where the individual ‘departs’ as well as arrives, as they inhabit spaces. Thus, moving into an estranged space often prompts memories of the old home, while learning and adapting to a new home. This further implies that temporary spaces of inhabitation may increase the desire for home, but they also allow us to create a sense of belonging within the in-between or thresholds of spaces. These spaces can replicate the overall function of the home, but may not provide the same comfort because of the juxtaposition between the two spaces. For example; The sound of birds chirping at home in contrast to the sound of heavy gunfire in the trenches; the boiling of water on a stove in comparison to the boiling of water on the heat of recently fired machine guns or the taste of homemade food to the taste of canned food heated on a fire.

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6 Sara Ahmed, “Home and Away: Narratives of Migration and Estrangement,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2, no. 3 (1999), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/136787799900200303>



Figure 6 : Photographer Unknown,  
Scenes at Gallipoli, 1914-1918.  
Auckland Museum Online Library Collections



Figure 7 : Photographer Unknown,  
Scenes at Gallipoli, 1914-1918.  
Auckland Museum Online Library Collections.



Figure 8 : Fenwick, Percival Clenell ,  
Lt. Col. Fenwick, D.A.D.M.S., outside his dugout ,  
1914-1918.  
Auckland Museum Online Library Collections.



Figure 9 : Photographer Unknown, Trench  
and dug-out, Anzac, 1914-1918.  
Auckland Museum Online Library Collections



Figure 10 : Photographer Unknown, Meals being prepared and cooked in a manmade oven dugout, April 15 ,1916 .  
Auckland Museum Newspaper Weekly Picture Collection



Figure 11 : Photographer Unknown, Man-made shelters and domestic spaces ,September 16 ,1916.  
Auckland Museum Newspaper Weekly Picture Collection

The in-between spaces allow an individual to form new methods of perceiving a sense of belonging through a continual process of making and remaking, dismantling and rebuilding, reading and writing. It is clear from photographs (Figure 6-11) that the trenches and dugout are these in-between/threshold spaces, where soldier's make pockets of domestic spaces inside or within the terrain.

Writing letters was a method of communicating with loved ones at home but also a method of expressing the conflicted meaning of home<sup>7</sup>. A letter contains the memories of the past home, experiences of the present home and glimpses of the future home. The pages become pure platforms for the juxtaposed dialogue of nostalgia that takes place between the memory of home, the current inhabited space and the imaginative rendition of home<sup>8</sup>. According to Bachelard this is because:-

*"We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories while leaving them their original value as images. Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost"* .

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7 Susan Stanford Friedman, "Bodies on the Move: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 23, no. 2 (2004), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/20455187>.

8 Nostalgia: from the latin "nosto" meaning to return home, and algia meaning sickness as defined in Michael Roper, "Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience in the Great War," *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 2 (2011), [www.jstor.org/stable/23017979](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23017979).

9 Gaston Bachelard, M. Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe, *The Poetics of Space*, 1994 edition. ed. (Beacon Press, 1994).

Home is therefore recreated by expressing what's been lost and gained by migrating from one spatial location to another. Therefore, the constant shift tends to increase the need for home, which in turn produces the rewriting of home. The poetics of spatial dislocation is that it creates an emotional partition with the home when away from home, yet through the expression of writing about the loss of home, they not only relive the memories of home, they return home. Home is a staging of personal memory and functions as a two-way mediator. Personal space expresses the personality to the outside world, but, equally important, it strengthens the dweller's self-image and concretises their world order<sup>10</sup>.

This thesis constructs a spatial narrative using the written account of a distant home as a mean to reconstruct domestic tableaux that portray the juxtaposition of being at home when away. Bachelard's "Topoanalysis<sup>11</sup>," is a useful method to understand this relationship. Topo analysis is a psychological attachment to spatial locations, where the spaces we inhabit are preserved as memories that suspend the flight of time. Topoanalysis allows Pryce's narrative to be portrayed through a series of geo-spatial locations as memories.

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10 Ibid

11 Ibid.

## Mnemonic Devices

In the book, “Holding on to Home : New Zealand Stories and Objects of the First World War, writers Kate Hunter and Kirstie Ross illustrate through the collection of artefacts, images and objects that past can be made tangible<sup>12</sup>. Meaning that they enable individuals to recollect and connect with the spaces, places, and people that are now absent. Margaret Gibson in Objects of the Dead states: “Once an individual has departed, their personal belongings and domestic inhabited spaces suddenly develop a certain consciousness as if the spirit of the absent now resides within the object itself<sup>13</sup>”. The object becomes a material through which the subject can project its characteristics in order to procure a sense of substance and a sense of dwelling beyond the body<sup>14</sup>. These objects not only recollect but also enable recollection through maintaining a spatial presence in space. They occupy space, just like we do, but also they have characteristics and personalities. Mnemonic devices are objects and spaces that enable one to dwell into an imaginative reconstruction of memory based on engagement with the past in the present<sup>15</sup>. For Pryce any objects from home were mnemonic, whilst for Pryce’s family the domestic space Jack Pryce inhabited and familiar object, he employed become mnemonic devices for them. Even through simpler objects such as photographs, recipes, stories, writing equipments, handkerchief etc. become crucial devices for both sides.

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12 Kate Hunter and Kirstie Ross, Holding on to Home: New Zealand Stories and Objects of the First World War (Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Press 2014).

13 Margaret Gibson, Objects of the Dead: Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life, 1 ed. (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press 2008).

14 Ibid

15 Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering, The Mnemonic Imagination : Remembering as Creative Practice, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

29 February 1916

Egypt

My dear mother,

*I am always glad to get any little photo like those. They remind me of pleasant times, and I like to get them out and look at them. The one of you and Edie by the door is just the kind I like. I have quite a little collection now and sometimes when I am looking at them the other chaps have a look as well. It is surprising how we like to see photos of home even though we don't know them<sup>16</sup>.*

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16 J. Pryce, T. McCormack, and A. Gibson, Jack's Journey: A Soldier's Experience of the First World War (Wellington, New Zealand: Glacier Press, 2017). Pg 59

Artist Rachel Whiteread's "Ghost" (1990) exemplifies mnemonic objects (Figure 12). It is a plaster cast of a humble room in Victorian Terrace House, a symbol that signifies time as past (Space) and present (Memory). Where the room was once a space to occupy, but now it remains as a memory in solid form. By solidifying the domestic characteristics of the room, what remains are the memories (surface) and traces (shell) of the room but not the room itself. The house is now absent, but it is still present as a memory of the spatial character to domestic life. The process of monumentalising is intriguing because, despite its permanence of tracing or solidifying what it was before, the mummified interior could be used as a catalyst to reverse recreate the original Victorian room thus giving a new life to objects that seemed lost. The material palette of plaster amplifies a monochromatic and melancholic atmosphere, and has a direct relation to loss, mourning and things that are forgotten.

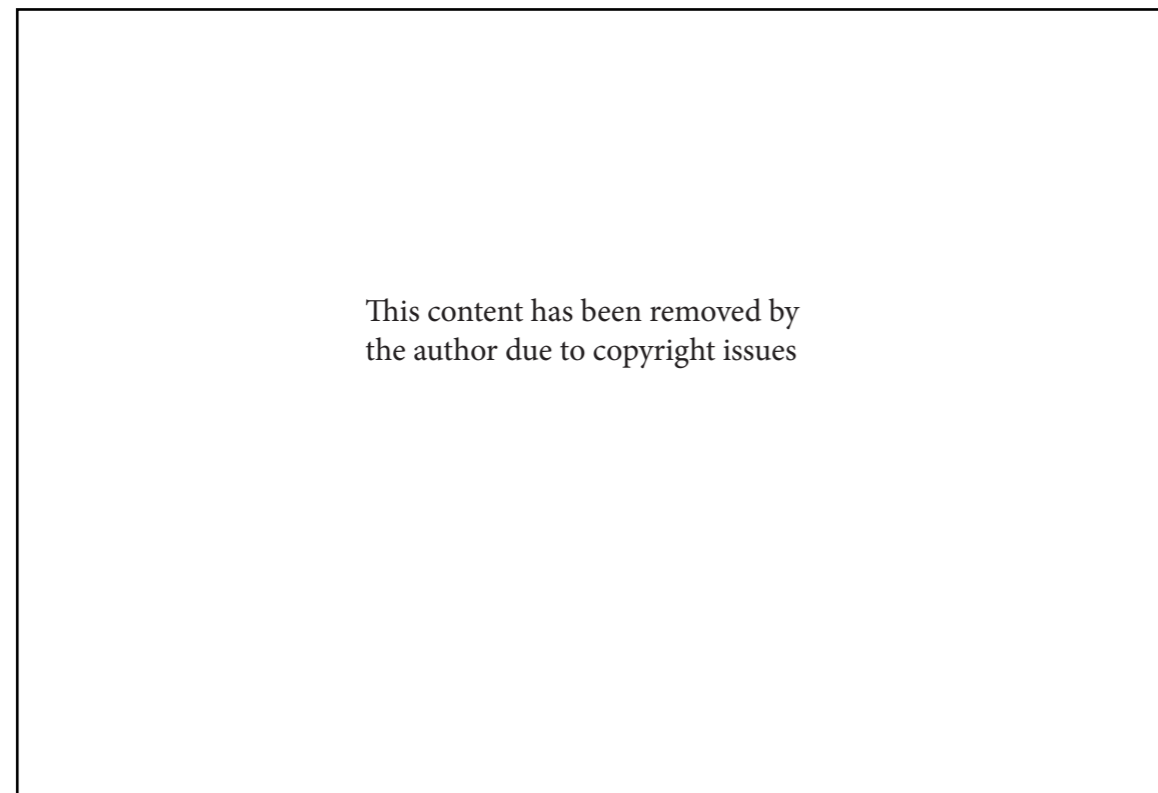


Figure 12: Whiteread, R, Ghost (1990).  
Plaster Object Installation  
Dimensions: 269 x 355.5 x 317.5 cm (269 X 355.5 X 317.5 CM)  
Exhibited at Satachi Gallery London 1990

Another example is Lee Ming Wei's "Letter Writing Project" (1998), where individuals were invited to express their intimate emotions through writing as a means of recollecting loss and connecting to absent people. The design consists of three timber frames each with a translucent cover to form an open-trapezoid box with a series of letter pocket shelves. This project is mnemonic because it houses letters and uses the notion of letter writing as a method of recollecting and storing memories. According to Bachelard, domestic spaces and objects can shoulder and bury our deepest emotions because they house many of our memories, but our memories tend to take refuge in them<sup>17</sup>. When memories are written as an act of poetry, they become tangible objects because they now carry weight and significance<sup>18</sup>. This means that they become objects of recollection themselves. Essentially, Ming Wei's design shoulders the weight of recollection by housing everyone's memories, but it also constructs space to be embedded with memories, stories and conversation.

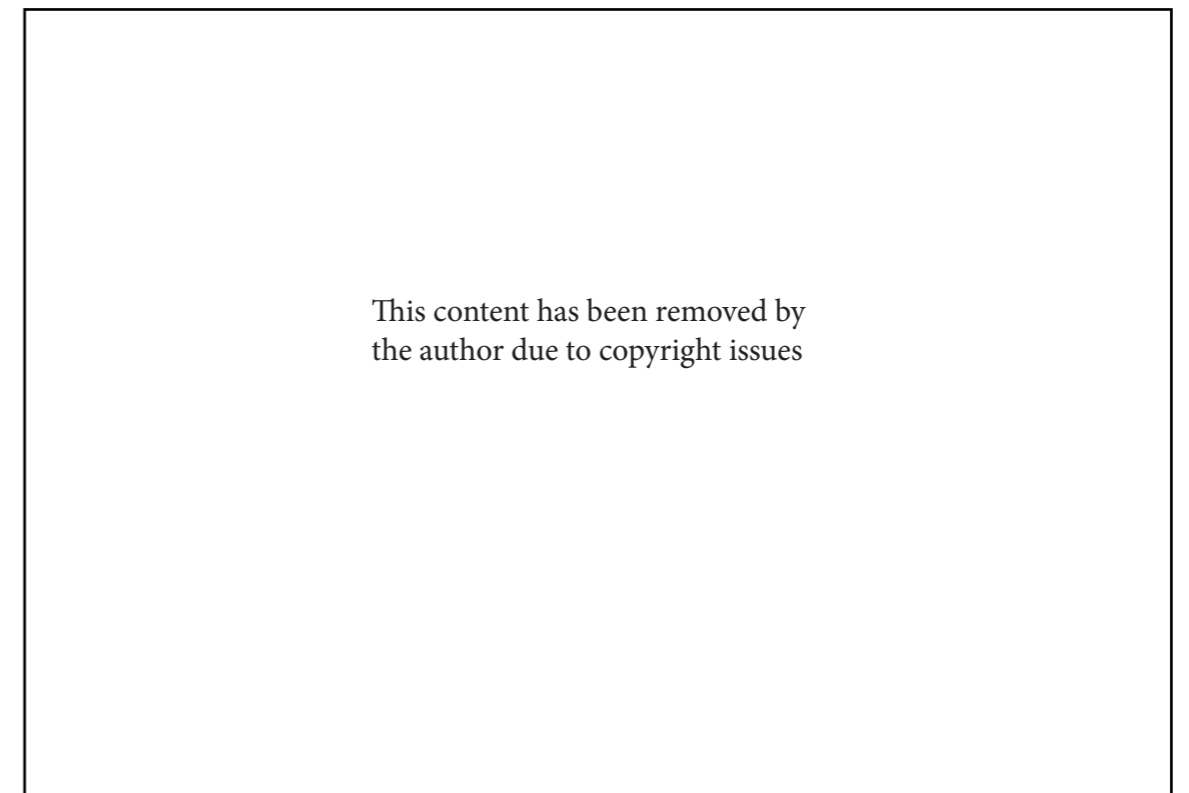


Figure 13: Fuminari, Yoshitsugu, Letter Writing Project (1998)  
by Lee Ming Wei - Mixed media interactive installation.  
Wooden booth, writing paper, envelopes.  
Dimension : 290 x 170 x 231 cm .  
Exhibited at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2014

<sup>17</sup> .Gaston Bachelard, M. Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe, *The Poetics of Space*, 1994 edition. ed. (Beacon Press, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> .Ibid.

The common concepts in these creative works are the absence of the person recollected through the memories and stories embedded in spaces or objects. They are both spaces or objects that memorialise absence or the absentee. In relation to Pryce's narrative, Pryce's sister Edie collected all the letters, photographs, postcards and objects she received from the frontlines and stored them in a writing desk. For Edie, these possessions became precious not only because they were from Jack Pryce, but also they were the thoughts and voice of Jack Pryce, during dislocation. Therefore by interacting with these objects, Edie could recollect and once again connect to Jack Pryce.



*Letters from Jack on Edie's writing desk*  
Natasha McMillan Photography

Figure 14 : Prasad, S . Scanned Image of Letters and objects from Jack stored by Edie in her writing Desk, 2019  
Original Photograph by Natasha McMillan

## Diorama and Miniatures

A diorama is a physical construction of an image, a perspective and a narrative; a prosthetic reality which imitates our realities within a small space. The main objective of dioramas is to activate an illusion of dwelling for the observer. Historically dioramas were just simply pictorial stills. Overtime, they became more immersive and three dimensional with the introduction of Panorama. Panorama depict scenes or objects by incorporating painted curved backgrounds with scale figures and artefacts to reinforce the illusion of a realistic space frozen in time<sup>19</sup>.

Novelist Steven Millhauser's "The Fascination of the Miniatures" suggests that the role of the miniature is to create or reproduce a universe that we can grasp and manipulate, in both physical and metaphorical form<sup>20</sup>. To understand any form of miniature we must embody it, become part of it and imagine the self within it before unravelling its secrets<sup>21</sup>. The extensive possibilities of miniature things do not only lie in their ability to be shrunken imitations of gigantic monuments, but rather their ability to invite readers within the interiority of the miniature universe to daydream<sup>22</sup>. To read poetry, letters or a novel is to daydream within the writer's world. Bi-location is a concept of being at two different spaces at a single moment of time. Bodily occupying the physical space, but also experiencing an imaginative illusion of the prosthetic or fabricated reality. Bi-location is also a moment of exteriorisation of both the consciousness and subtle bodies from the physical body.

Many museums have adopted the dioramic medium as a method to represent historical events, people, items and stories. More specifically the interiority of museum have always been designed as a series of dioramic spaces that enable spatial storytelling at varying scales through effective use scale, colour, figures, lighting, depth, arrangement, tone, interaction and expression. Two good examples of this principal are Te Papa Museum's The Scale of Our War exhibition and Australian War Memorial's the "Dioramas".

Te Papa's Gallipoli, The Scale of Our War Exhibition in Wellington, includes large-scale sculptures and miniatures that focuses on the individual experiences of the soldiers and nurses in the peninsula based on personal diaries (Figures 15-17). The core focal point of this exhibits are the six rooms holding meticulously crafted human sculptures almost three times larger than life size. Each space is a domain where the character is at their most vulnerable. As you navigate the exhibition you hear, loud, mournful phrases (sound recordings) being played in the darkness and calligraphy from the personal diaries of each character appears on the walls. The in-between spaces hold an array of miniature dioramas and objects that further expand upon the personal narrative and the larger ANZAC collective of during the Gallipoli campaign. The entire experience feels claustrophobic – replicating the experience of the trenches. The most important are the postures, stances, body language and facial expressions that each character has. They allow the audience to relate to the trauma and emotions directly. It makes the audience feel like that they have violated the characters personal space laden with grief.

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19 .Claudia Kamecke and Rainer Hutterer, "History of Dioramas," in *Natural History Dioramas: History, Construction and Educational Role*, ed. Sue Dale Tunnicliffe and Annette Scheerso (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2015).

20 Steven Millhauser, "The Fascination of the Miniature," *Grand Street* 2, no. 4 (1983), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/25006539>.

21 .Gaston Bachelard, M. Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe, *The Poetics of Space*, 1994 edition. ed. (Beacon Press, 1994).

22 .Ibid.



Figure 15: Prasad, S. Percival Fenwick,  
Gallipoli -The Scale of Our War Exhibition( 2015-2019).  
Te Papa Museum, Wellington.



Figure 16 :Prasad, S. Jack Dunn,  
Gallipoli -The Scale of Our War Exhibition( 2015-2019).  
Te Papa Museum, Wellington.



Figure 17 :Prasad, S. Lottie Le Gallais,  
Gallipoli -The Scale of Our War Exhibition( 2015-2019).  
Te Papa Museum, Wellington.

Australian War Memorial's "The Diorama", were first created at the end of the World War One in 1919, illustrates the appalling conditions that the soldiers lived and fought in throughout the war( Figure 18-19). All the dioramic environments portray constant destruction , chaos , terror and danger. It's a very traditional type of dioramic display with figures, background, colour and depth portraying realism. The spatial characters in these dioramas are elements that make up the mise-en-scene. The terrain, the trenches, the wet mud, the devastated environment, the broken-down machinery, the painted smoke , the skies and the barbed wire fences. All the dioramas offer the viewer a frozen fragment of time by placing the battles with geographical location with miniature human figures. The narrative is told spatially through the location that they are illustrating with effect use of chiaroscuro lighting.

The key differences between the two dioramic exhibitions is that one focuses on telling personal stories by focusing on a certain individual whilst the other uses the environment and background to tell the collective story.



Figure 18 :Prasad, S. Somme Winter 1916-1917,  
The Dioramas, 2019.  
The Australian War Memorial Museum.



Figure 19 :Prasad, S. The Battle of Lone Pine , August 1915,  
The Dioramas, 2019.  
The Australian War Memorial Museum.

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issues

Figure 20: Nighswander, T, Joseph Cornell's *Untitled (Pinturicchio Boy)*, 1945-52.  
Box Construction /Dimensions : 35.4 x 28.4 x 9.8 cm  
Exhibited at The Joseph and Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation/VAGA, NY/  
DACS, London 2015.

Another example of the dioramic approach can be seen in the creative works of artist Joseph Cornell, which is very different from the historical driven dioramas of museums. Cornell was a filmmaker, collector of objects and a collage maker who focused on creating a fictionalised narrative using disparate objects at intimate scales. He would take old books, prints, photographs, and souvenirs and compose them within a small glass box to create picturesque dioramas<sup>23</sup>(Figure 20). Cornell's dioramas were arranged as visual poems, because they would often consist of juxtaposed objects from different times, style, scale, forms and textures<sup>24</sup>. The boxes and the collages within them explore collecting, assembling, arranging and confining as methods of creating microcosmic stories from everyday domestic and foreign objects. Cornell's miniature dioramas present a unique theatrical-ephemeral quality of spatial negation and negotiation between our spatial exterior and their spatial interior existing in and out of time. I believe that Cornell's entire dioramic process can be divided into 3 main stages. The first is the collection of the objects (narrative elements). The second is the box (framing of the narrative). The third is perception (atmosphere and imagination of the audience witnessing the narrative) What is most interesting about Cornell's dioramas is they are all layered with multiple narratives. He creates dioramas that capture our own curiosity to investigate the various narratives hidden within. There is not one central theme but many. It illustrates that through a single diorama you can tell more than one story or a single story which is only completed once you have seen all the layers. Through Cornell's creative works I've learnt that through layering you can portray many stories in a diorama.

All of these works suggest that a diorama is a process of staging and composing a specific experience, event and phenomena. The poetics of diorama is not just about seeing something that is essentially a still life. It is about seeing something through something else. A diorama can be understood as a unique way of understanding and perceiving which is made imaginable by a framing, boxing, a juxtaposition, an overlay, a window or door that results in creating infinite boundless space that is everywhere and no where.

23. "How Joseph Cornell Became an Artist - Youtube," (accessed 2020/02/04/07:18:13, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r\\_CXS7bXtw&t=166s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r_CXS7bXtw&t=166s)  
[files/8/watch.html](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r_CXS7bXtw&t=166s).

24 Ibid

**To Read**  
*Decoding the Memories*

**Research Design Methods and Methodologies**

In this chapter I layout the key methodologies and methods that have informed my practice. These methodologies are centred around my reading , interpretation and response to Jack Pryce’s letters.

*Lemnos*

*5 November, 1915*

*...I got a bit of cocoa I had picked up and my mess tin, using the water from the condenser (which was boiling from the gun working so fast) I made enough cocoa for all of us on the gun and we swore it was the finest drink we had had for a long time.*

*Imagine me making cocoa while one man is firing the gun and another man filling belts.....*

*P.S Don't forget anything like little photos of any of you or people I know or any little thing to remind me of home will be acceptable. You would hardly believe how they seem bring old place nearer.*

*Jack<sup>25</sup> .*

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25 J. Pryce, T. McCormack, and A. Gibson, *Jack's Journey: A Soldier's Experience of the First World War* (Wellington, New Zealand: Glacier Press, 2017). Pg 58.

## Narratology As Storytelling

For this project, I've chosen the methodology of narratology because my main aim is to portray Pryce's narrative to my audience with the help of my practice. Narratology is simply a structure of sequential storytelling where the entire narrative is divided into parts. Narratology allows me to determine what parts are narrated (the story) and how it is narrated (the method) and to whom it is being narrated (audience). My narratological approach to Pryce's story is the structure of focalisation. Focalisation is the arrangement and presentation of elements that convey a narrative. A relationship between perception, the viewer and the object <sup>26</sup>. Cultural theorist and video artist, Mieke Bal distinguishes three main sub-structural components of written narratives texts. The first is "fabula" (elements) which consist of all spatial narrative attributes such as events, actors, time, objects and location<sup>27</sup>. The second is the "story" (aspects), the medium and platform through which the fabula is presented<sup>28</sup>. Lastly, the "text" (words) which includes the involvement of the narrator and the verbal actualisation of fabula and story<sup>29</sup>.

There is nothing like a book to take us from the comfort of our domestic spaces. Yet it's a gate that leads me to the fields of battle to the most unforgiving conditions of nature. In this project, Pryce' entire narrative is understood and read through a series of documents compiled into one single collection. These documents are monologic as they are letters written by a single character/ person. The contextual review of other practitioners and writers has helped me situate the research within a wider framework of practical and theoretical practice. Which allows me to frame Pryce's narrative in relation to the collection of objects and archives available at the museum.

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26 Débora Oliveira and Sandra Maggio, "The Deadly Perception of the Witness: Focalization in Markus Zusak's the Book Thief," 70 (04/01 2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2017v70n1p135>.

27 W. Bronzwaer, "Mieke Bal's Concept of Focalization: A Critical Note," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 2 (1981), accessed 2020/03/16/, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1772197>.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

In his letters, Pryce is a homodiegetic narrator (character in the story). When reading, I become the focalizer, a heterodiegetic narrator (not a character in the story). My key focus is on the juxtaposition of domestic rituals and artefacts and how they would differ outside the traditional household spaces. Therefore, to understand these contexts, I undertook a series of archival investigations to accurately understand the context of World War One. This involved visiting and analysing many of the current World War One exhibitions and their portrayal of similar narratives (see chapter 2). The most interesting aspect throughout all these dioramic exhibitions was that they used a kind of focalisation where they would focus on specific events or personal stories. Narratology also allows me to explore and analyse existing or previous creative practical outcomes on similar conceptual terrain to situate my own practice.

### **Practice Led Research:**

This form of research involves moving from the 'known to the unknown' as new knowledge is constructed with the spaces and places through making, as making is generally regarded as a consequent to thinking<sup>30</sup>. The making practice not only drives the conceptual thinking process but also can be the creator itself<sup>31</sup>.

Space to me has always been a platform for imaginative storytelling. For my practice I like to take people on a narrative driven spatial journey, to discover the beauty and poetics of space itself and use material to shape it. Equally, the core of my practice is to imbue a narrative with a spatial character. Such a character is explored through conceptual fabrication of form, light, shadow, tone, colour, mood and process of material selection. Essentially, I explore a style or genre of narrative and the way that narrative is best conveyed to the audience through either the process of spatial arrangements or staging of elements.

In this type of research fabrication ( Digital and Physical) is my primary method of exploring spatial solutions . In this project I replicate and fabricate spaces and objects from the war using 3D printing and plaster casting to explore my narrative mediums. By also incorporating element of motion capture , I was able to experiment with performative and interactive elements of the overarching narrative and create a spatial medium where traditional memorial and exhibition practice can co-exist beside the modern visual and virtual performances to create more engaging experience for the viewer.

For me being behind the camera always meant experimenting with spatial arrangements, exploring spatial concepts and interpreting spatial experience. Photography is the visual medium of collecting and remembering information and data that captures time, space, scale and atmosphere where memory cannot. To me, photography is a form of storytelling where elements of narratives, stories, atmosphere and characters are spatially composited and distilled into one single image. This image then becomes a platform for the audience to dwell within. The use of photography was vital to re-imagine the tone and atmosphere of Pryce's journey during World War One.

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30 .Hazel Smith and R. T. Dean, Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts, Research Methods for the Arts and Humanities (Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2009).

31 Ibid.

According to architectural theorist Mark Wigley, atmosphere is a kind of sensuous emission of elements whirling a mysterious climate through a stationary object, thus, to enter a space or building is to inhabit the ephemeral effects of the space itself rather than the building<sup>32</sup>. Through atmosphere we allow the audience to dwell and delve into the narrative.

One day, while exploring narratives for this project, I found a book. As I read, I left my chair, my room and my house. I visualised Pryce wrapped up in his memories, trying to write home but having difficulty finding words. When he did, he wrote about home and home-like rituals, creating a sense of spatial belonging and home. Then suddenly he disappears and I was back sitting on my chair in my room. A sadness filled up my eyes as I read that he never returns home. How strange it seemed to hear a living voice speaking from the pages and then suddenly it goes quiet.

According to architect Juhani Pallasma “We use our own bodies as an instrument to not only experience the realities that we live in but also project our own experiences into the reality, which can only be achieved through active interaction of all the senses of the body<sup>33</sup>”. Every practice and process of creative making becomes a multisensory experience where I measure qualities of space, matter, scale, atmosphere through my eyes, ear, nose and skin<sup>34</sup>. To me, making is essentially part of my thinking, where one does not exist without the other.

Therefore, in this project with the help of my practice, I seek to re-imagine both the dioramic platforms of representation and Pryce’s narrative and experiences expressed within his letters as a series of physical spatial juxtapositions that expresses the concepts of belonging and home during dislocation.

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32 Mark Wigley, “The Architecture of Atmosphere,” *Daidalos Architectur* 68 (1998).

33 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin : Architecture and the Senses* (Wiley, 2012).

34 Ibid.



Figure 21 :Prasad, S. Plaster Casted Tiles with Laser Engraving, 2019.

**To Reply**  
*Writing back to the Memories*

**Reflective Analysis of Creative Practice**

## The Auckland War Memorial Museum

Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum is an iconic Neo Classicist landmark and one of New Zealand’s first museums designed by architectural firm Grierson, Aimer and Draffin(Figure 22). The museum tells the tales of New Zealand, its cultures and its communities. The museum is well known for its collections including a library that consists of Māori and Pacific collections, significant natural history collections and phenomenal war collections. My first visit to the museum was when I was 13 years old. At that age, the museum seemed full of interesting and weird objects. Every year I would return to the museum and walk around just to see the changes that had taken place since the last visit and to see the new collections. As I grew, I came to the realisation that the museum was essentially a series of spaces and stories that are constantly shifting within the confines of architecture.

This project started with a visit to the Museum to look at their portrayal of war based personal narratives, its integration within a space and how successful they were. The design and visual language of Pou Kanohi designed by Pearson and Associates(Figure 23) provides the audience space and room to contextualize their own view and understanding of World War One<sup>35</sup>. The space is specifically aimed towards educating the young with collectable content on the key events of the war through primary sources such as letters, photographs and diaries which are grouped by thematic keywords. These content can be collected by using a content card, which can be used to access collections from home. The design is very successful in the overarching war narrative of the collective that were on the frontlines in relation to the collections. The layout focuses on the flow of people arriving and departing the space with a didactical approach to the stories. The biggest strength of this exhibition is in the digital screentouch screen that showcases the letters of individuals that allow the audiences to connect to them directly through reading. While I do like the approach, I do think there can be an approach to making more engaging, interactive and spatially performative narrative exhibition which not only show but also focalize the collection relative to the narrative of its owners.

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35 . “Pou Kanohi,” Pearson & Associates (accessed 2019/09/04/ 12:03:56, <https://www.pearsonarchitects.co.nz/exhibition-design/files/16/exhibition-design.html>).

I saw an opportunity to reconceptualise and contribute further to the collections and medium of narratives by focusing attention on the stories of individual soldier using contemporary dioramic methods. I wanted to also explore new ways of mourning lost soldiers using small scale interventions to mourn lost soldiers rather than large scale memorials. Instead, provide an alternate miniature scale and intimate experience that is as effective as a large-scale monument or sculpture.



Figure 22 :Prasad, S. Auckland War Memorial Museum, 2019.



Figure 23 :Prasad, S. Pou Kanohi World War One Stories Exhibition, 2019.

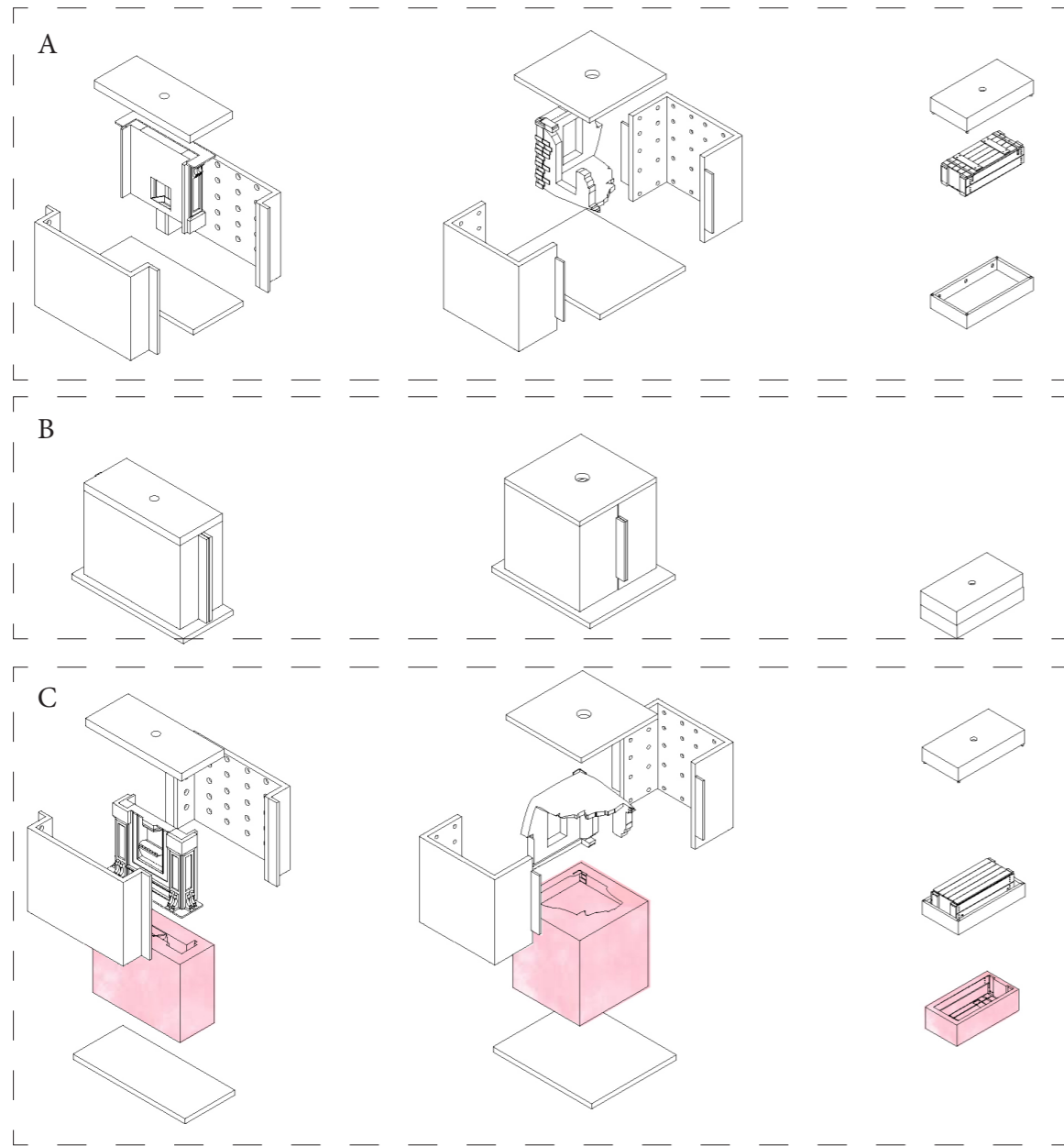
## The Poetics of Plaster Objects

The casting process is a dialogue that takes place between the object and the space that surrounds it. It is filling the exterior space of an object with a liquid compound to create a void that is then used to make new objects or replicas of old ones. For the fabrication of the dioramas I wanted to use plaster to replicate domestic details and objects. The peculiar nature of plaster is that it is a material that has a certain permanence of absence and presence in space. A material that memorialises memory, space, time and imagination. I wanted to amplify the feeling of sadness, loss and emptiness, therefore my approach to using plaster as a material was inspired by the work of Rachel Whiteread (See chapter 1, Figure 12).

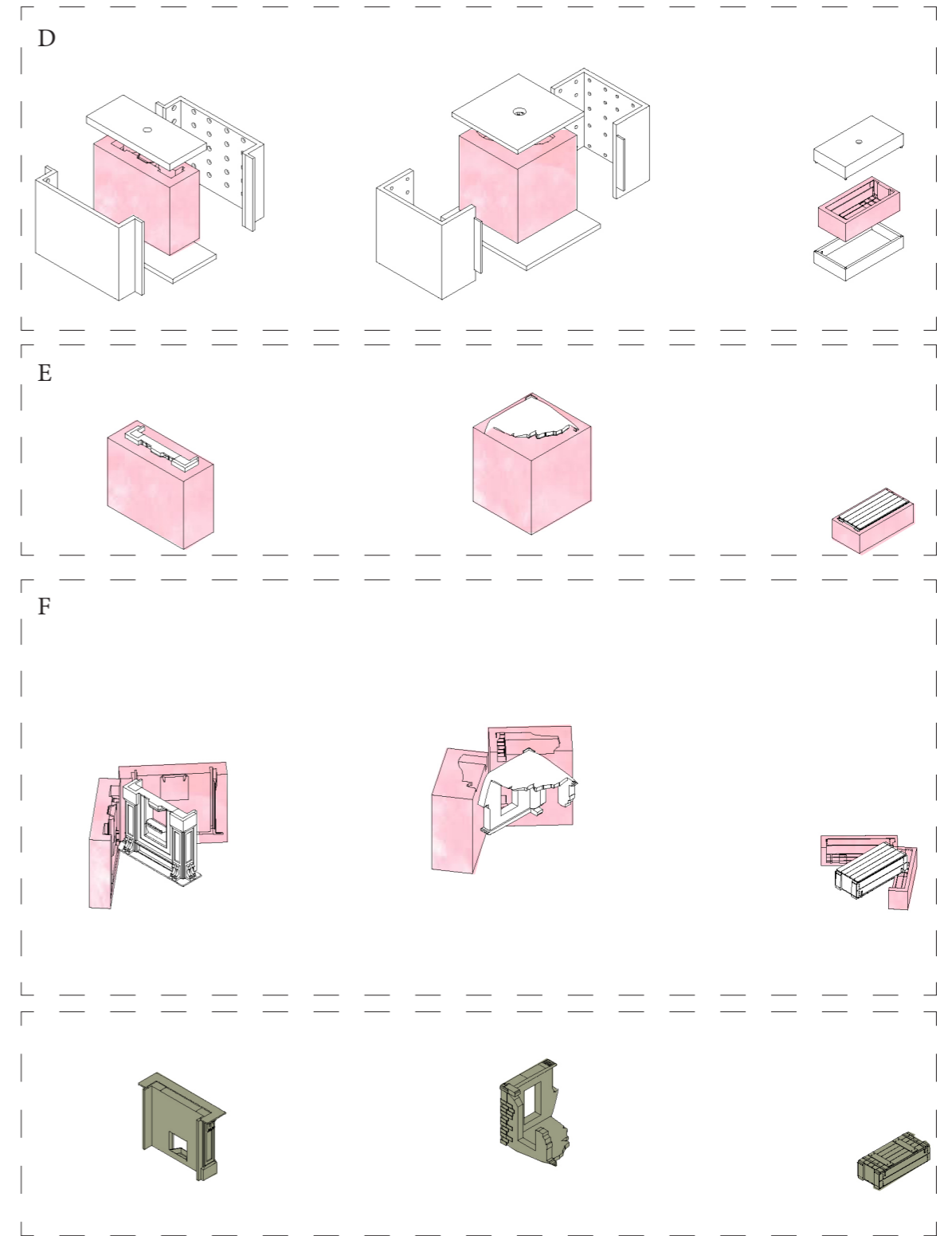
Before beginning the casting process, I first needed physical models of the historic objects and artefact that would be part of my diorama. I initially intended to use photogrammetry as a method of recreating 3D models of archival objects. For this process to work, I would have needed access to the artefact with clear lighting conditions in an empty space. Since physical access to these objects and artefacts was limited I decided to use photographs I took of the objects in the galleries and manually model them in the 3D modelling software Rhinoceros and Blender. I first modelled them in Rhinoceros, and if the object had more organic or irregular shapes I transfer it to Blender for the sculpting process.

After completing the modelling process, the object is printed in the 3D lab. I used two types of printing process: PLA Plastic (polylactic acid) and SLS (selective laser sintering). PLA uses a roll of filaments that is heated and layered to create the 3D model. SLS Printing uses a laser as the power source to sinter powdered white material, binding it together structurally to create the 3D model. Depending on scale and complexity I would alternate between the two types. PLA is faster and cheaper for quick prototype and prints better if the object is bigger. SLS is much more expensive and slower but can print very detailed models.

For each object I had to model additional components for the casting. These components were the mould for the object. Depending on shape and size it would require moulds of two, four or six parts. These moulds were used as exterior casing for casting the object in Pinkysil silicone. Pinkysil silicone is super-fast setting with its 1:1 mix ratio by volume silicone that is good for capturing intricate details. The work time for Pinkysil was on average 6 minutes from mixing to pouring and another 30 minutes to demoulding. I assembled the mould pieces and object in place and secured any possible leaking points with clay. After that I sprayed the interior of the mould and exterior of the object with releasing agent to provide a non-stick barrier between the 3D printed object, the moulds and the Pinkysil. Once the Pinkysil was cured, I removed the 3D printed object out of the Pinkysil cast and reassemble the mould parts with the Pinkysil mould to pour the plaster (Figure 23).



A+B -3D Printing Moulds and Objects Assembly  
 B -Close the Mould with Object placed inside and pour Pinkysil  
 C- -Disassemble the Mould and Gently Extract the 3D Printing Object from the Pinkysil



D -Re-assemble the Mould with the Pinkysil inside and Pour Liquidised Plaster Mixture  
 E -Disassemble the Mould with the Pinkysil  
 F-Gently Extract Plaster Object from Pinkysil by making an linear incursion directly in the centre of the Pinkysil

Figure 23 :Prasad, S. Assembly Drawings of the Plaster Casting Process, 2019



Figure 24 :Prasad, S. Plaster being Sieved into Water, 2019

My plaster mixing ratio was 2:3 Ratio (Water : Plaster)(Figure 24). My choice of mixing equipment depended on the scale of my object. For small-scale objects I used paper cups, but for larger scale it ranged from plastic containers to buckets. I poured fresh cold water into my clean mixing container and then folded in the plaster powder slowly to avoid air bubbles. It was best to mix plaster with my hands as it allowed me to break down larger plaster lumps and reduce the quantity of bubbles in my mixture. Once the plaster mixture was ready, I poured it into the mould and created vibration by using a hammer, gently hitting the worksurface to release any bubbles. Although the curing time is 1 hour I would usually wait another 24 hours before taking it out of the plaster mould and another 24 hours placed in the drying cupboard. One advantage of this was that I could reuse the Pinkysil mould of the object to make multiples of the same object.(Figures 25-26)



Figure 25 :Prasad, S. Unravelling the Memories( Extraction of Plaster Object),2019.

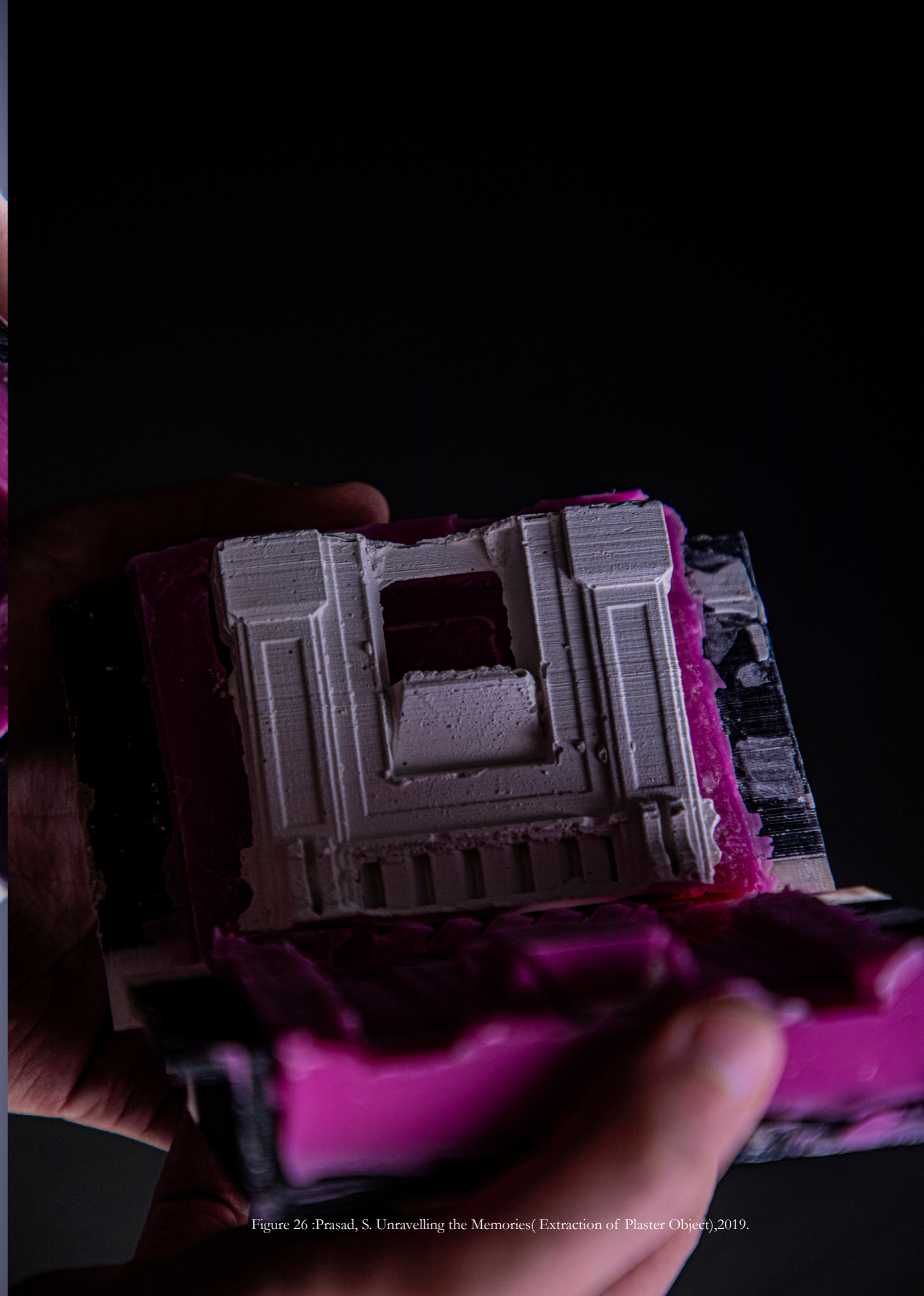


Figure 26 :Prasad, S. Unravelling the Memories( Extraction of Plaster Object),2019.



Figure 27 :Prasad, S. Holding onto Memories (Plaster Cast Objects),2019.

One thing I realised was that no matter how many times I cast these objects in plaster, they always had a form of deformation. The effect of air bubbles created interesting voids and as time passed, the plaster objects began to wrinkle, crack and break. The nature of plaster casting is that it traces every single detail of the objects even the lines from the 3D printed object. Every time I held it in my hand, it felt colder and lighter than before. They also felt very fragile and precious if not taken care of properly. The casts themselves become a form of artificial materialised memory of both the process of my making and a memory of the object it is supposed to represent. The power of such mistakes and voids creates a melancholic atmospheric spatial quality with light and shadow, demanding our immediate attention (Figures 27-30). According to Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies, Giuliana Bruno, the encounter with the surfaces of an object and the space that surrounds becomes a key method of understanding our material world and building our sense of aesthetic space<sup>36</sup>.

*“The modern aesthetic rested on the understanding that a place, like an art object, cannot be separated from the viewer: the aesthetic experience is haptic when it tangibly establishes a close, transient relationship between the work of art and its beholder<sup>37</sup>. In this sense the term haptic, as we have insisted, refers to more than just touch, for it comprises the complexity of how we come into contact with things. As a surface extension of the skin, then, the haptic engages that reciprocal contact between the world and us that “art architecture” embodies”<sup>38</sup>.*

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36 Giuliana Bruno, *Surface : Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media* (Chicago, UNITED STATES: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

37 Ibid

38 Ibid.



Figure 28 :Prasad, S. Holding onto Memories (Plaster Cast Objects),2019.



Figure 29 :Prasad, S. Holding onto Memories (Plaster Cast Objects),2019.



Figure 30 :Prasad, S. Miniature Diorama Composition (Plaster Cast Objects),2019.

Figure 31 :Prasad, S. Camera Carousel Concept Drawing-Plan ,Section and 3D, 2019

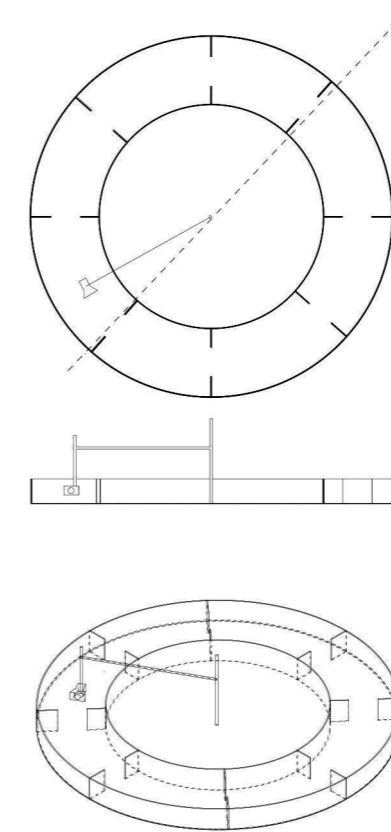
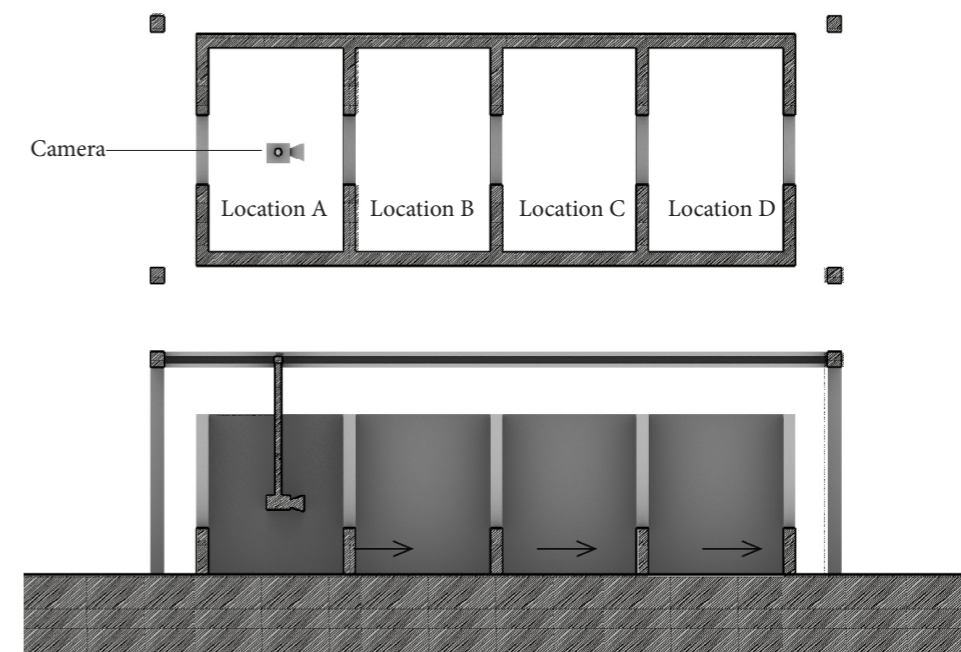


Figure 32 :Prasad, S. Camera Linear Concept Drawing- Plan and Section ,2019.



## The Film Sequence

The film approach concept was to create a short sequence using a single diorama that showcased all the spatial dislocations during the war with a camera slowly moving through and capturing details of destruction and the relevant objects in the scene(Figure 31-33). As the camera moved from one end to the other, it would have shoot the various locations. Beginning from Pryce’s home, it would have moved into the trenches and back home. For this I cast a plaster block (50cm wide by 120 length cm by 20 cm height) onto which I then used the CNC (Computer Numerical Control) to dig out a trench(Figure 37-38). I placed the miniature dioramic objects(Figures 34-36,39-40) However, I realised then that the scale was too small, and the camera couldn’t fit through the scene. Even though this concept didn’t work as planned, it established the overall style and tone of my dioramas(Figures 39-42). Moving forward I decided to chisel the trenches instead of using the CNC because I felt that the CNC made the trenches extremely clean and soft, whereas the chisel allowed me to replicate the excavation process of an actual trench(Figure 39-40). I believe that the combination of all spatial locations into the single diorama also wasn’t successful because it made it difficult to differentiate them .Instead I decided to break the location down into 4 distinct spaces. The four dioramic spatial locations were “Home” (Pryce’s bedroom), “the trenches of Gallipoli”, “the trenches of Passchendaele” and back to “Home”. I was interested in amplifying the concept that the beginning is also the end of the narrative. Each spatial location was constructed based on historic photographs.

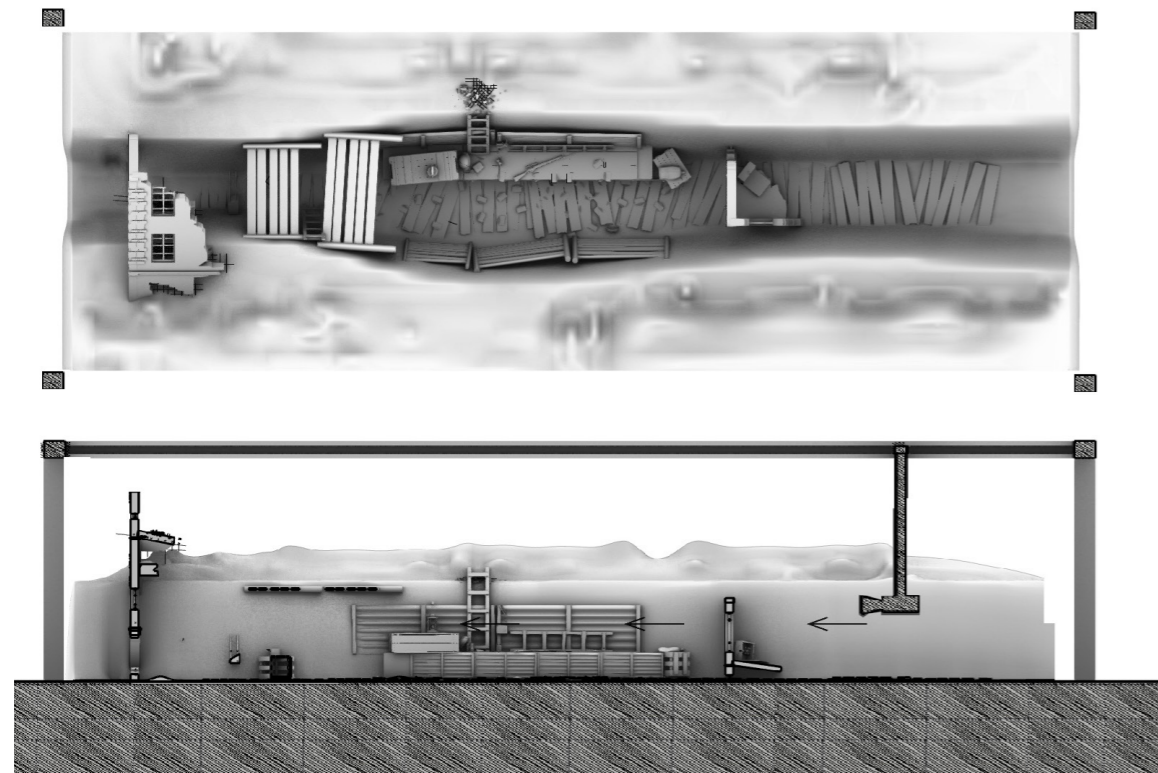


Figure 33 :Prasad, S. Rhinoceros Model -Diorama Sequence Shooting Concept Drawing ,  
Plan and Section ,2019.



Figure 34 :Prasad, S. Rhinoceros Model -Diorama Sequence Shooting Concept Render ,  
2019.



Figure 35 :Prasad, S. Rhinoceros Model -Diorama Sequence Shooting Concept Render , 2019.

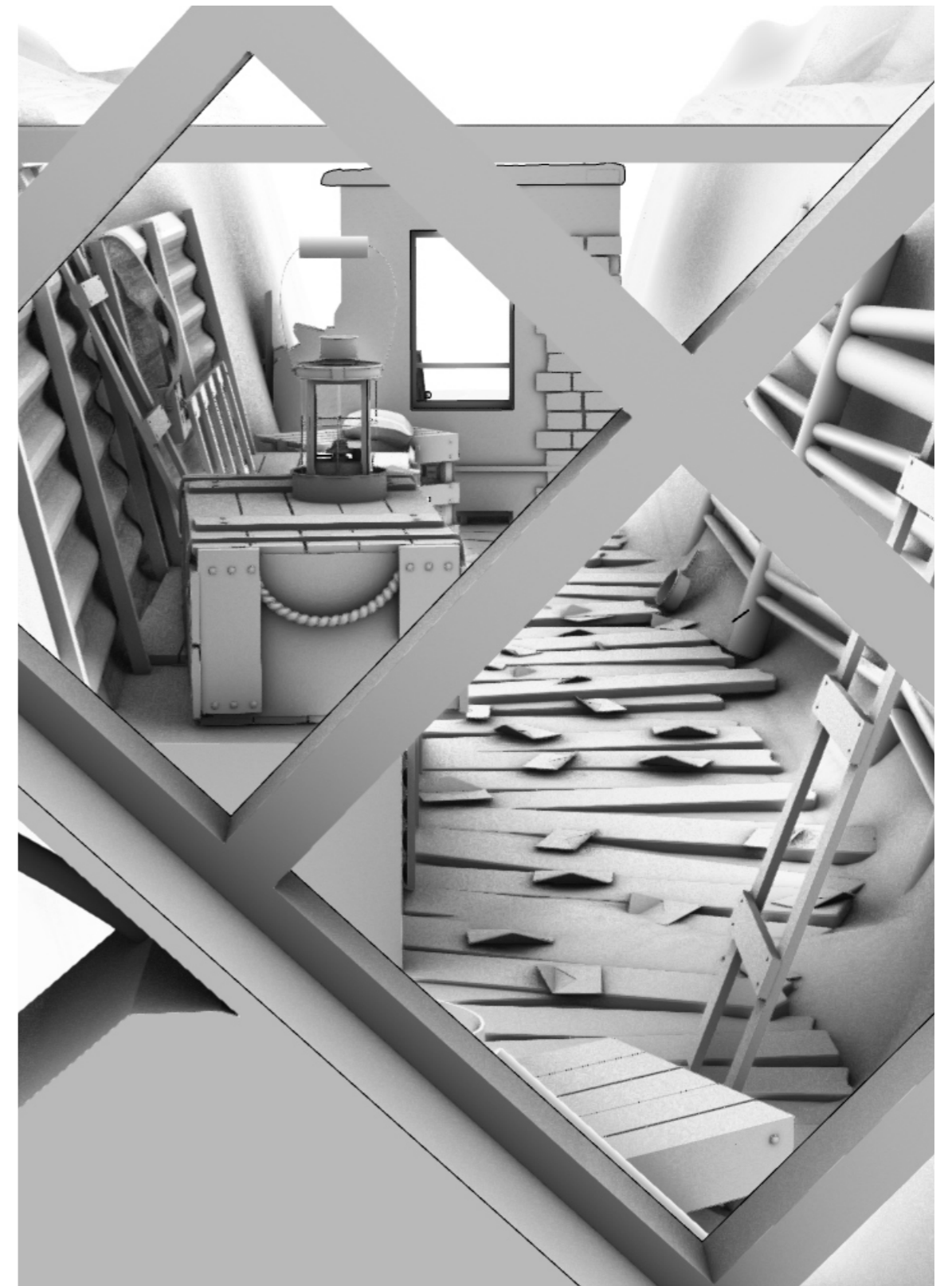


Figure 36 :Prasad, S. Rhinoceros Model -Diorama Sequence Shooting Concept Render , 2019.



Figure 37: Prasad, S. Plaster Cast Block , 2019.

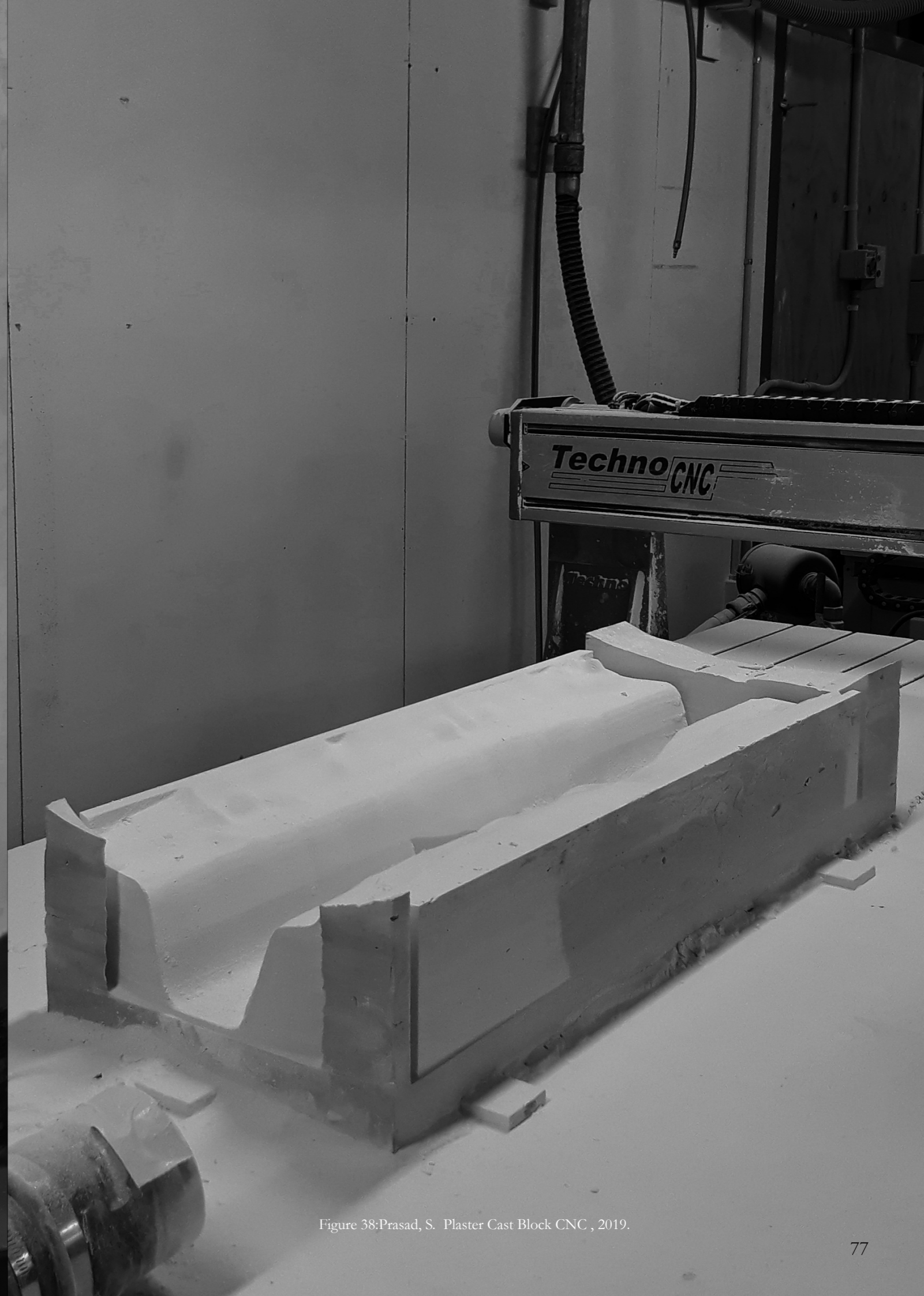


Figure 38: Prasad, S. Plaster Cast Block CNC , 2019.



Figure 39: Prasad, S. Diorama Setup in Trench, 2019.



Figure 40: Prasad, S. Diorama Setup in Trench, 2019.



Figure 41: Prasad, S. Chiseled Plaster Trench , 2019.



Figure 42: Prasad, S. Chiseled Plaster Trench with Miniature Object , 2019.

## The Box (Framing the Narrative)

The concept of the box is similar to Joseph Cornell's glass boxes (See chapter 1, Figure 20) in which he arranges his collection of artefacts. For me the box played two key roles. The first was to house the diorama of Pryce's narrative and the second to hold artefacts that correspond to the diorama. Essentially the box is the mediator between the museum archival collection and Pryce's narrative. Therefore, if the scale of the diorama changes, so does the scale of the box. The box represents the idea of home and the sense of belonging, where the contents within the box are the monumentalised objects that portray the emotions, experiences and epistolary correspondence of its writers. The poetics of boxes is that they are mostly envelopes of our own identities, memories and stories, but also are traces of people that are now absent. The box encompasses the possessions that are unforgettable for us but also to whom we handover those possessions to<sup>39</sup>. The box is a condensed reality of the past, present and future, existing within the same space and time. According to Bachelard, this concept is already realised through domestic furnishing such as drawers, wardrobes and cabinets where these objects drive the social and political aspects within the household, transforming it from a drawer of memories to a home of memories<sup>40</sup>. One could say that nothing is hidden forever, as enclosed spaces signify a need for secrecy, suggesting hidden possession, but they are also an invitation for violation and exploitation of the contents and its narrative<sup>41</sup>. The nature of the box or frame are that they differentiate two modes of space where inside the box we become occupants, dwelling with the narrative but outside we are mere spectators<sup>42</sup>.

The very first concept of the box was a round table with a diameter of two meters with the diorama in the centre and a series of drawers at the bottom. The drawers would contain letters and objects from the museum collection (Figure 43-47). The approach to this first concept was inspired by Lee Ming Wei Letter Writing Project (See Chapter 1, Figure 13). I wanted to create a system that enables or involves a type of interaction from the public. Only through interaction with these drawers would a user be able to piece together the narrative. I choose a circular form for this concept because it's an unbroken line which does not have a beginning, an end, allowing the audience to direct the narrative themselves. Using some 3mm MDF I made a model to understand the complexity of this concept in terms of its construction. Using a circular form has its own complication as everything has to be perfectly aligned and placed.

In the second concept I wanted to introduce elements of opening and closing, like the plaster moulds and objects (Figure 48). In this iteration, the exterior drawer shelf would open to reveal the diorama sitting in the centre. In the third concept I combined the elements from the first two to design a letter writing and reading room (Figure 49-50). Eventually I decided not to move on with these concepts because, they relied way too much on the audience reading letters, and less on visual storytelling. The only element that I took forward from these concepts were the mail box / drawer that the audience would open. I believe that this would be the best method of unravelling the collection of artefacts with the audience itself, rather than opening a letter.

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39 Bachelard, Gaston, M. Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe. *The Poetics of Space*. 1994 edition. ed.: Beacon Press, 1994.

40. Ibid

41. Ibid

42. R. Bianca Lepori ( Karen A. Franck, *Inside, Outside and inside-Out* (Chichester, England: Wiley 2000).

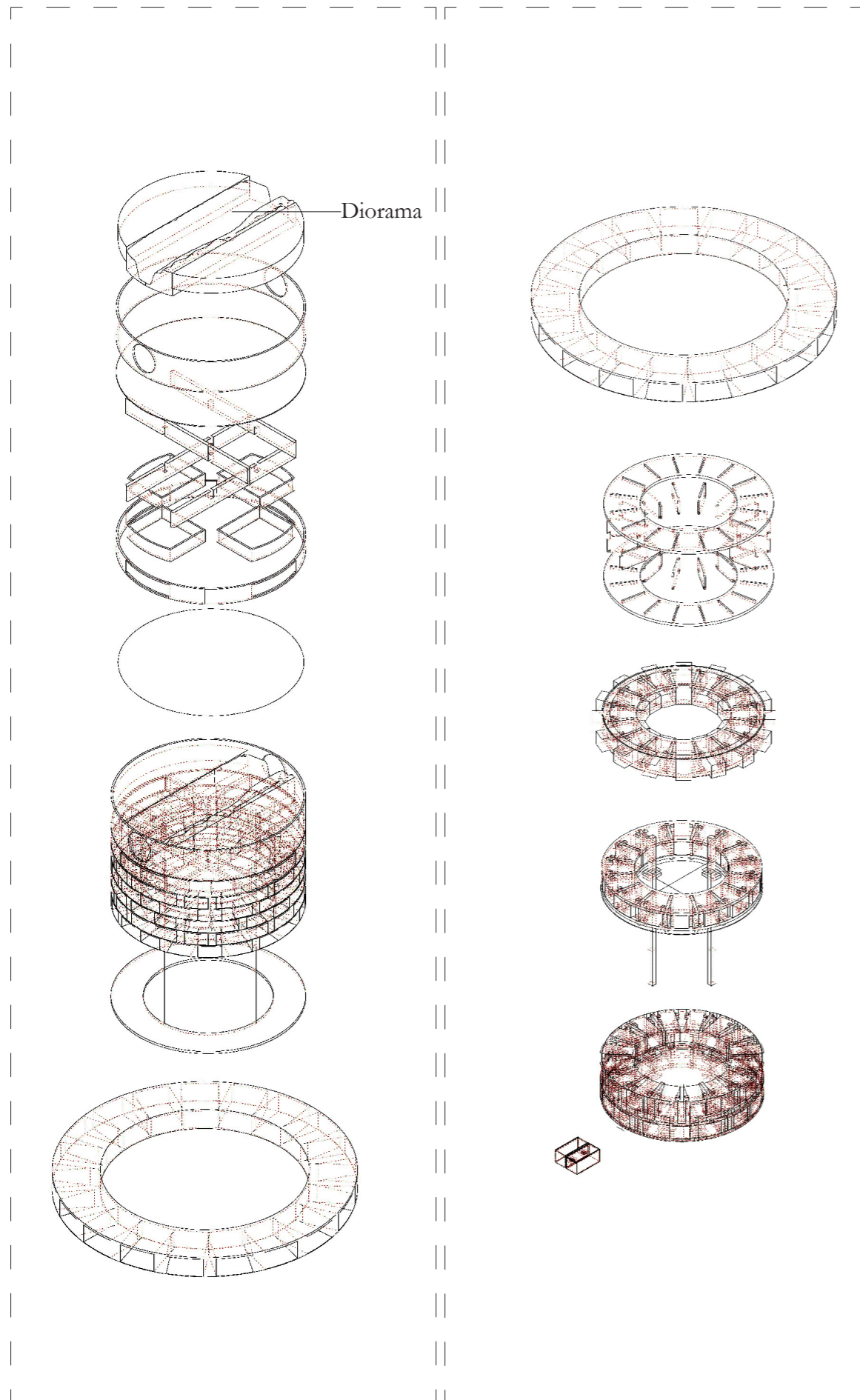


Figure 43 :Prasad, S. Exploded Drawing of First Concept , 2019.

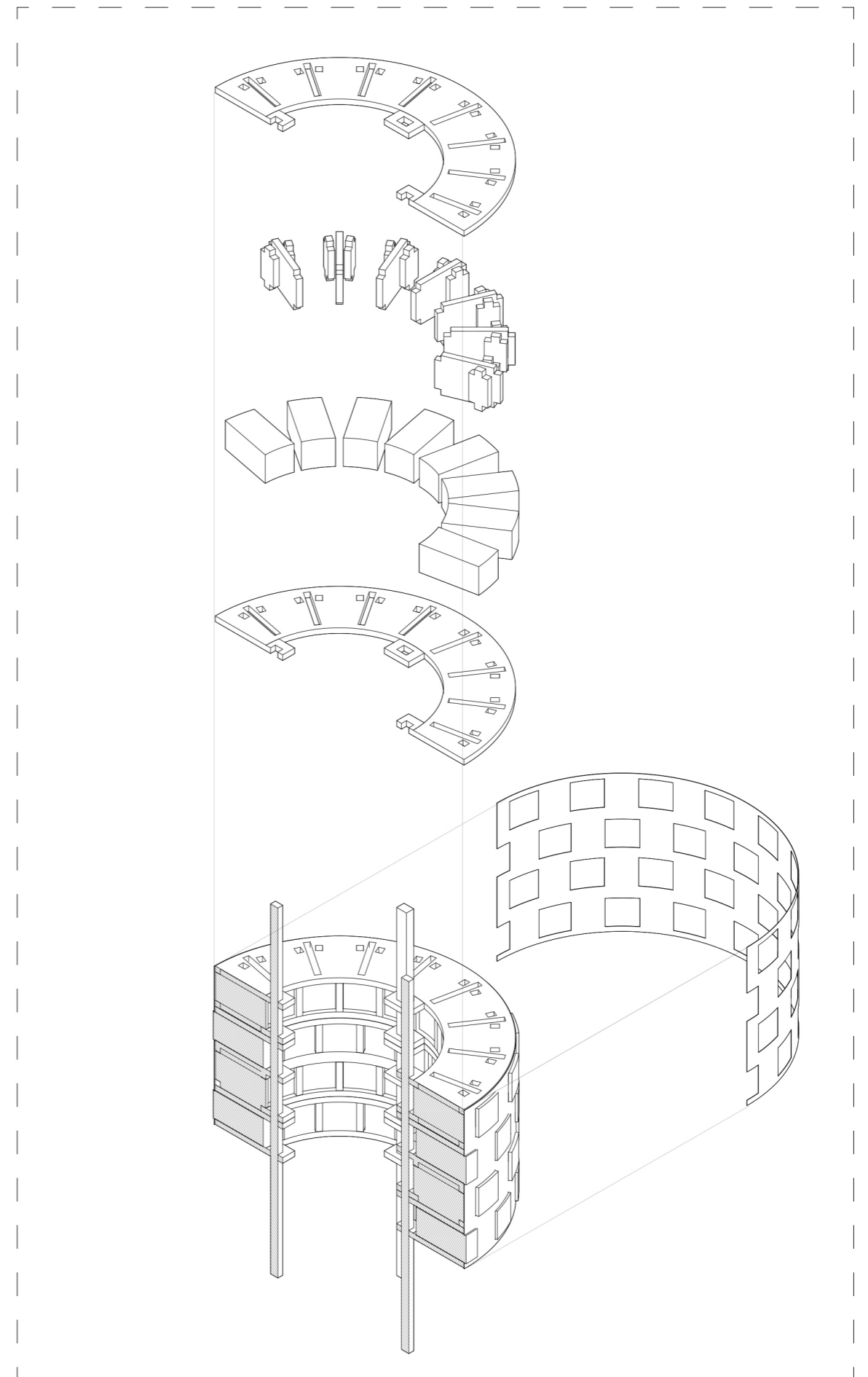


Figure 44 :Prasad, S. Exploded Section Drawing of Drawer System , 2019.

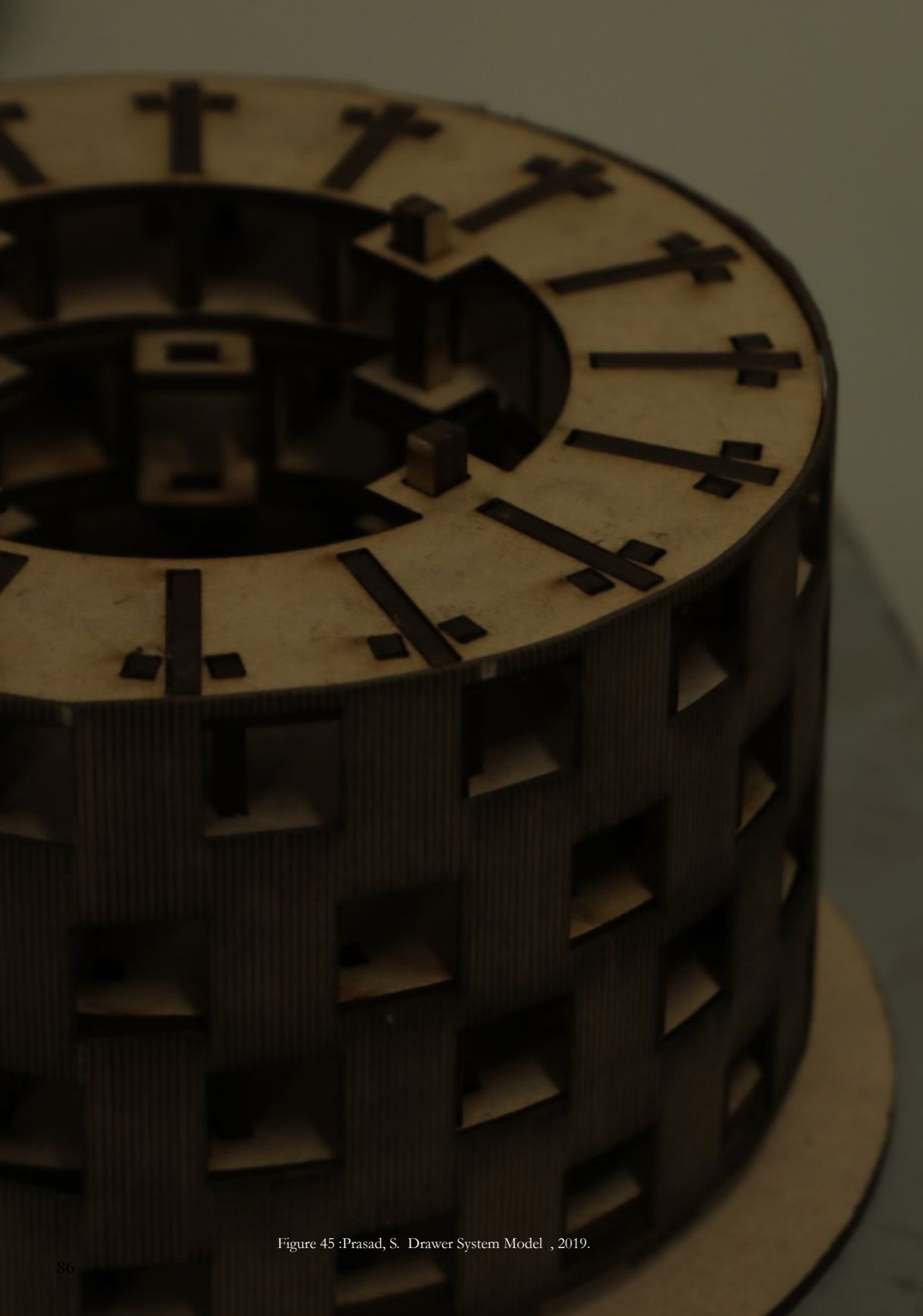


Figure 45 :Prasad, S. Drawer System Model , 2019.

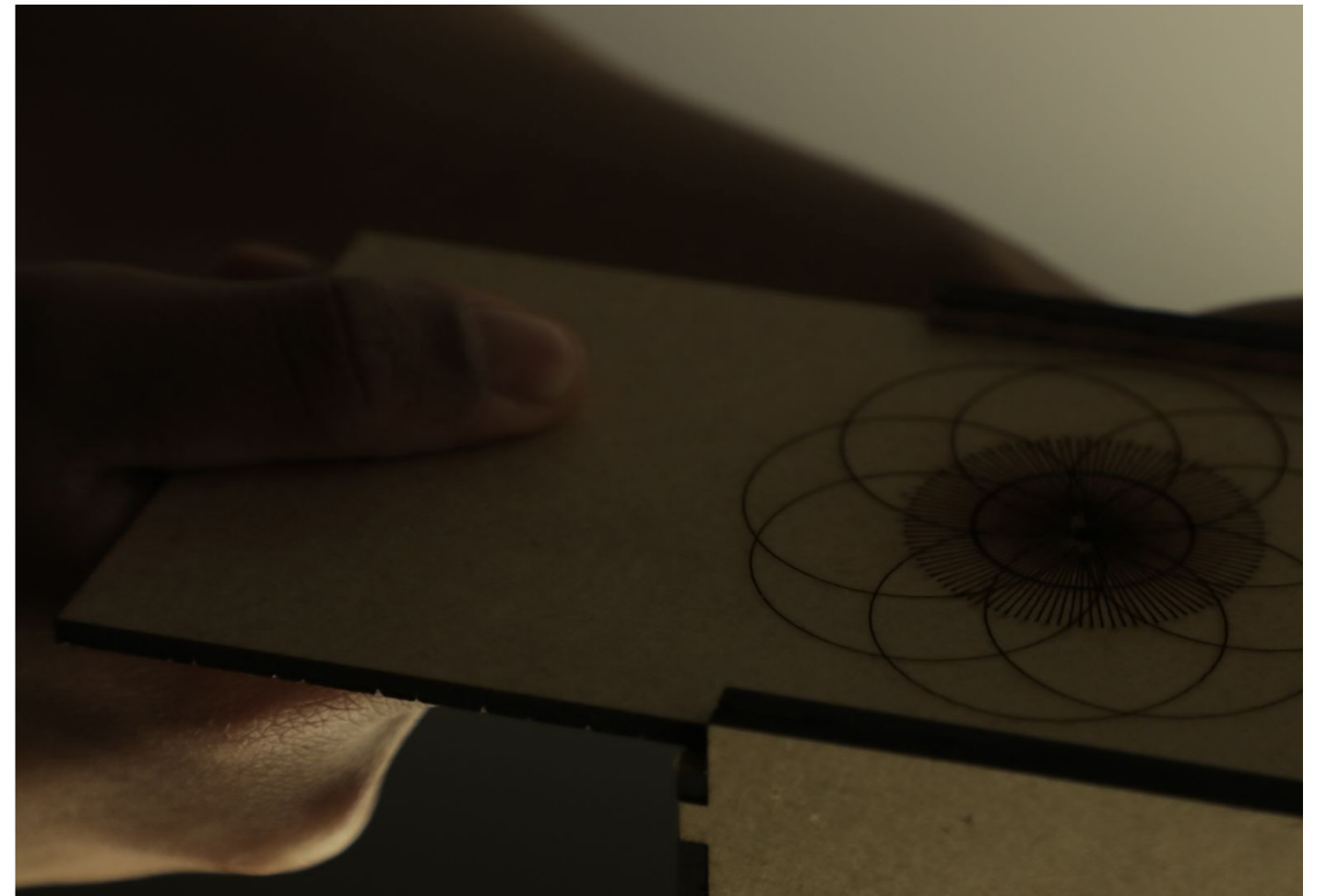


Figure 46 :Prasad, S. Mail Box , 2019.



Figure 47 :Prasad, S. Mail Box Content , 2019.



Figure 48 :Prasad, S. The Second Concept-Open and Close , 2019.

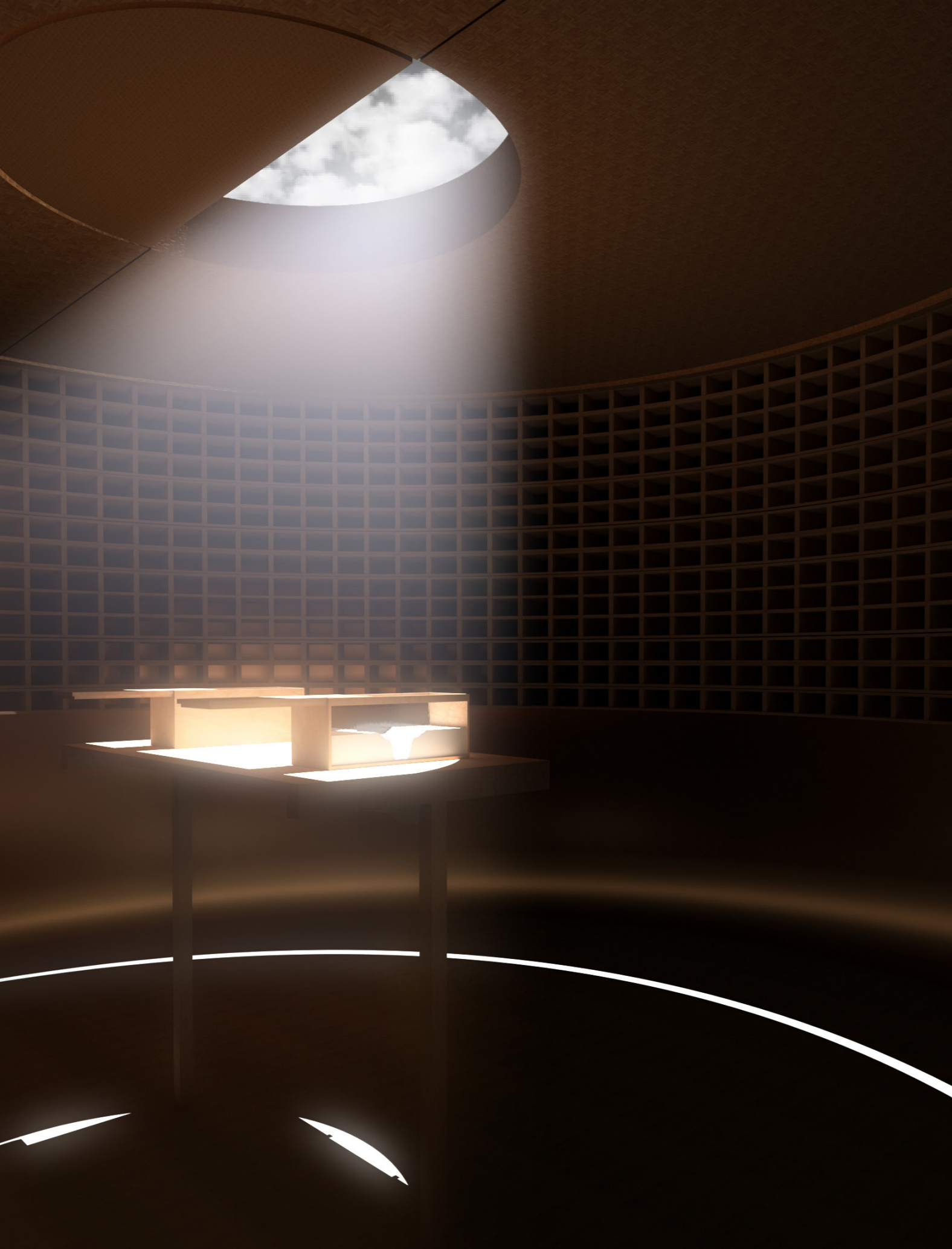


Figure 49 :Prasad, S. 'Third Concept -The Mail Room', 2019.



Figure 50 :Prasad, S. 'Third Concept -The Mail Room', 2019.

## The Theatre of War

During my investigation, I came across a term called “theatre of war”, which were essentially, footage, slideshows or plays portraying the progress of the war to those on the home front. I wanted to somehow include this theatrical element in my design. I came across an interesting phenomenon called Pepper’s Ghost. Named after scientist John Henry Pepper, Pepper’s Ghost is an illusion technique used in early theatre performances. Basically, it is a flat sheet of glass that is placed at an angle of 45 degrees towards the audience with an image placed directly below it or above (Figure 51). I wondered what if the dioramas were simply just a backdrop and Jack’s domestic rituals were the performance. According to Bachelard,

*“In the theatre of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles . . . . And if we want to go beyond history, or even, while remaining in history, detach from our own history the always too contingent history of the persons who have encumbered it, we realize that the calendars of our lives can only be established in its imagery”<sup>43</sup>.*

This would not only shift away from traditional still life dioramic display but reconceptualize the dioramic platform as a medium of theatrical culture. If theatre refers to both dramatic practice (performance) and the building (architecture) housing that practice, then for this project the performance is the diorama and the architecture is the design of the box<sup>44</sup>. I made a small model to test this concept using some of the cast objects. I used my phone to play a short clip and place it above the glass (Figure 52). The first prototype was very successful, due to it being a miniature, but as the scale increased it was difficult to integrate the phone with the diorama. I needed a system that integrated the two components seamlessly without feeling like an add-on or after-thought. *(Continued in The Theatre Box Chapter)*

43 Bachelard, Gaston, M. Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe. *The Poetics of Space*. 1994 edition. ed.: Beacon Press, 1994.

44 Dorita Hannah, *Event-Space : Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-Garde* (Routledge, 2019).



Figure 51 :Prasad, S. Pepper’s Ghost Illusion Section Drawing , 2019.

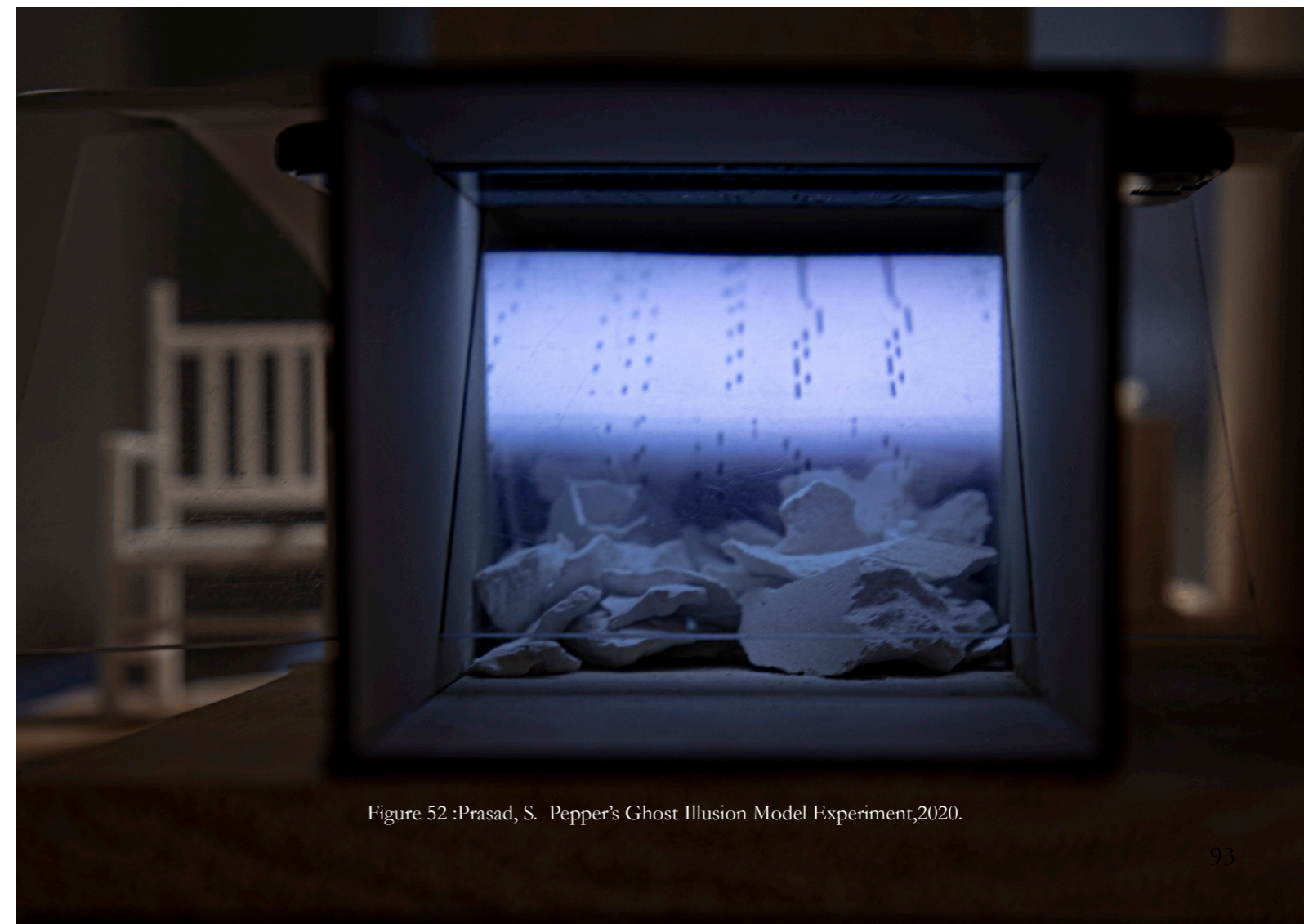


Figure 52 :Prasad, S. Pepper’s Ghost Illusion Model Experiment, 2020.

## The Performance

I want my dioramas to be more immersive and interactive rather than static. Recreating a deceased person digitally would provide a medium for more interactive and performative storytelling between the character and the audience. Te Papa's The Scale of Our War exhibition is a good example of technology and craftsmanship showing this medium by creating large scale replicas of real people (Chapter 2, Figures 15-17). These sculptures were 3D modelled based on reference images of the spatial location and individual portrait photographs on computer programs like Zbrush.

The first step of the digital recreation was to collect photographs of Jack Pryce (Figures 3-4). These reference images were important as it helped to accurately 3D sculpt the character. Generally, to 3D sculpt a person I need to take a 360-degree image. In the case of Pryce, there were only four known images of him (mostly front facing). Therefore, working with the limited photographic information that were available I used a programme called Zbrush, which is a digital 3D sculpting, modelling, texturing and painting tool. I did think of physically sculpting it in clay and then 3D scanning it but with Zbrush it makes the process simpler, cleaner and gave more control over the finer details.

Once I finished the base sculpt of Jack, which included the anatomy and facial features (Figure 53), I moved onto modelling and sculpting clothing features (Figure 55). The clothing corresponds to the specific spatial location that the dioramas depict (Figure 54). The transition of the clothing is important as it highlights both the characters development, personality and psychological state. The clothing and Jack's 3D model are then exported for rigging. Initially, the plan was to use Blender as the main animation and rigging software but there was no clear pipeline to import and apply motion capture data to the rig character. After spending several weeks trying to figure out a pipeline, which ultimately never seemed to work, I switched to using Maya as the animation and rigging software. Rigging is a process of taking a static mesh (such as character model) and creating an internal digital skeleton. It involves creating a relationship between the mesh and the skeleton (the process is called binding) and adding a set of controllers. To simplify: rigging is the process of adding a series of controllers or strings to the character to make a puppet.

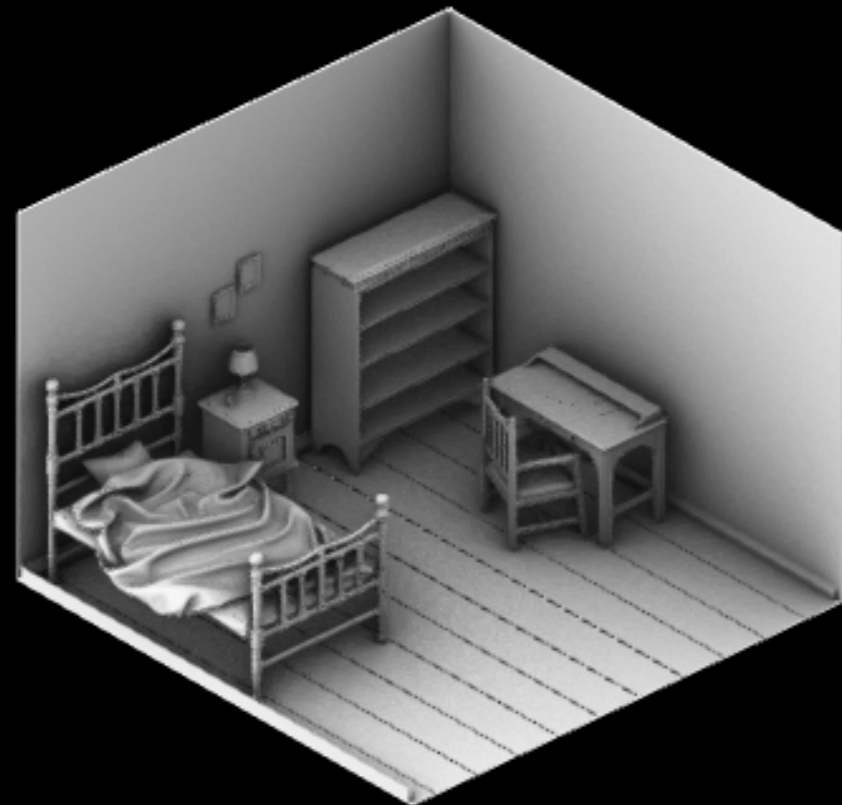
The second step was the performance capture. This is a process of recording and digitising the movement of objects and people using an infrared optical camera. We use a bodysuit that is covered in markers, which the camera then picks up as digital information. I was particularly interested in replicating Pryce's domestic activities as these activities would directly correspond to the spatial environments that Pryce is within.

The first movement recorded was sitting and reading a book (Figure 56). This motion would correspond to the Home diorama (Figure 54) because it represents intimacy, privacy, peace, a hobby and comfort. The second movement was sitting and cooking a meal (Figure 56). This motion would correspond to the Trenches of Gallipoli diorama (Figure 54) and showcases a soldier's domestic ritual of cooking and longing for a home cooked meal. The third motion capture conveys Pryce's reading letters that he has just received (Figure 56). This motion would correspond to the Trenches of Passchendaele diorama (Figure 54) showcasing the importance of the epistolary correspondence to maintain his connection to home and the loved ones he has left behind. There is no fourth motion as Pryce never completes the cycle back to home (Figure 54). Therefore, in the final diorama, there is no performances, rather just the letters he sent home. I wanted to keep all the motion performance connected to the theme of home because the activities that Pryce performs in the trenches are reminiscent of domestic life and were mentioned in the letters, he wrote home.

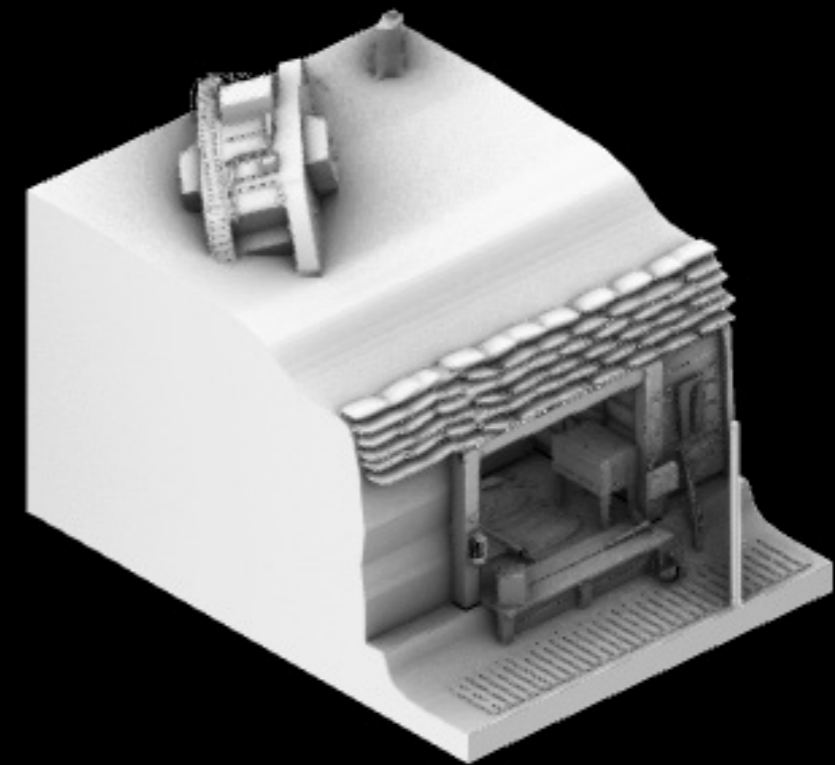
The motion data is reviewed and cleaned for errors in a program called Cortex. This information is then used to create a digitised skeleton of the performance in a program called Motion Builder. Motion Builder is a 3D character animation software where the motion capture data is given more definition such as additional animations, movements and characteristics. The motion data is then exported to Maya and applied to the rigged character model of Pryce. After I added props to the scene such as the book, spoons, cups, and letters. The final steps are to step up the light in the scene and render the animation.



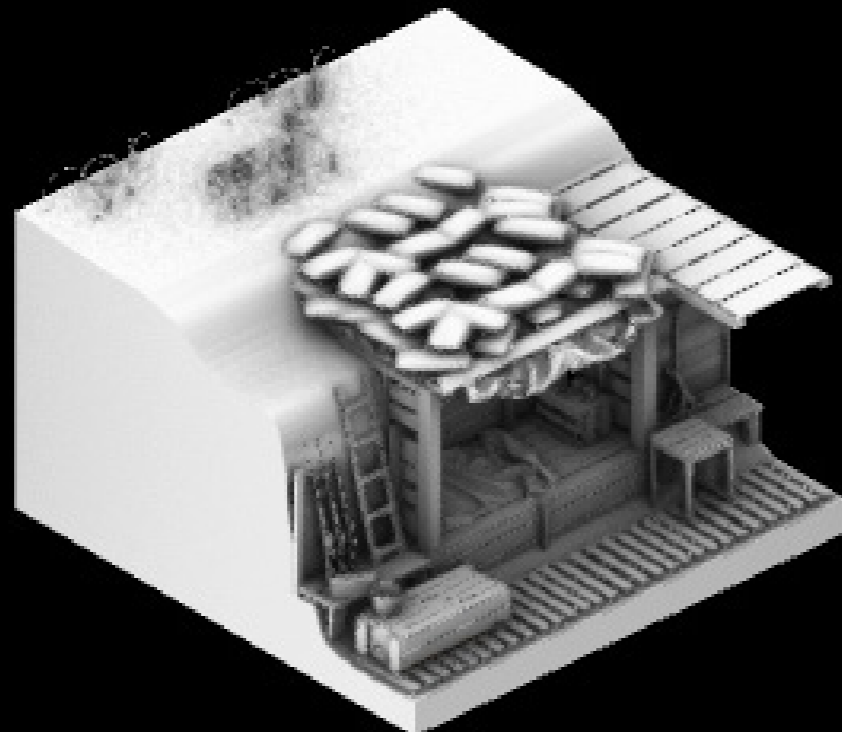
Figure 53 :Prasad, S. Blendshapes - Pryce's Facials , 2020.



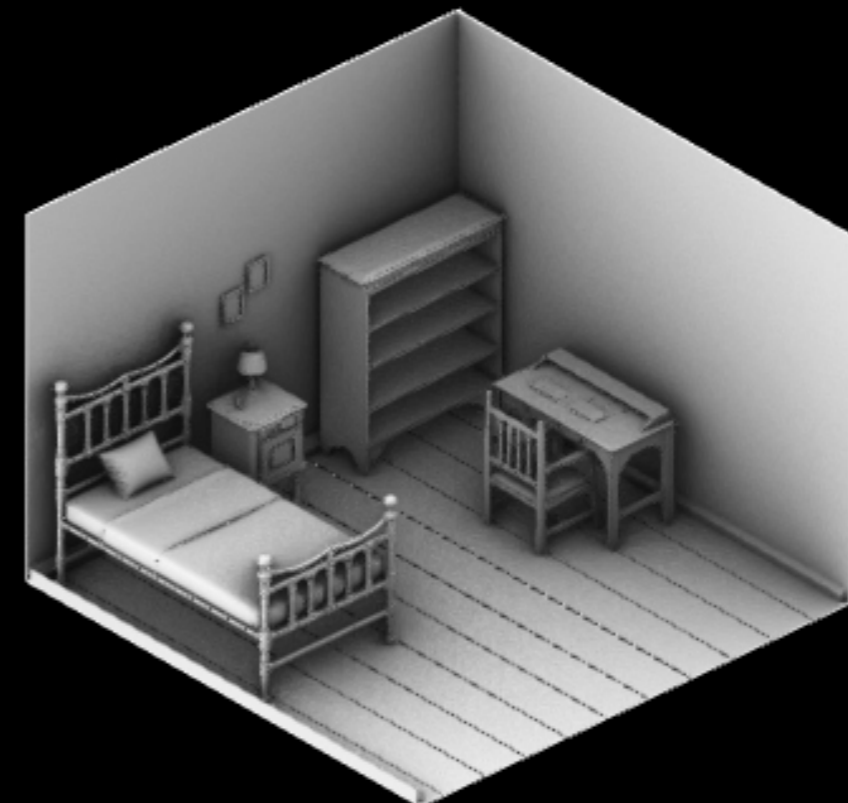
Pryce's Bedroom (1914)



Trenches of Passchendaele(1916-1917)

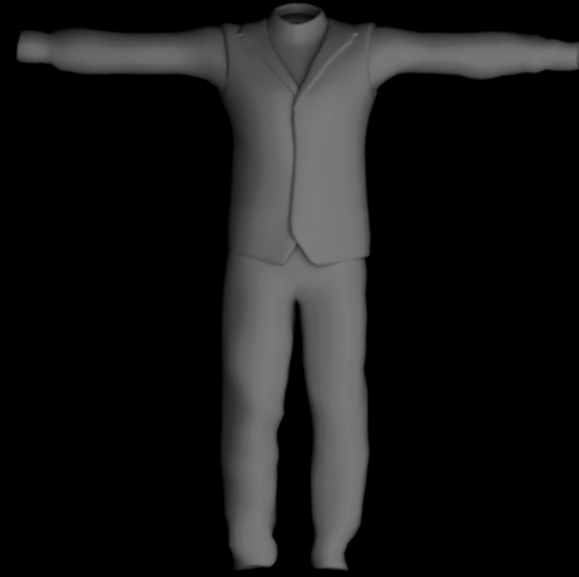


Trenches of Gallipoli(1915)



Pryce's Bedroom (1918)

Home - Invercargill



Trenches of Gallipoli



Trenches of Passchendaele

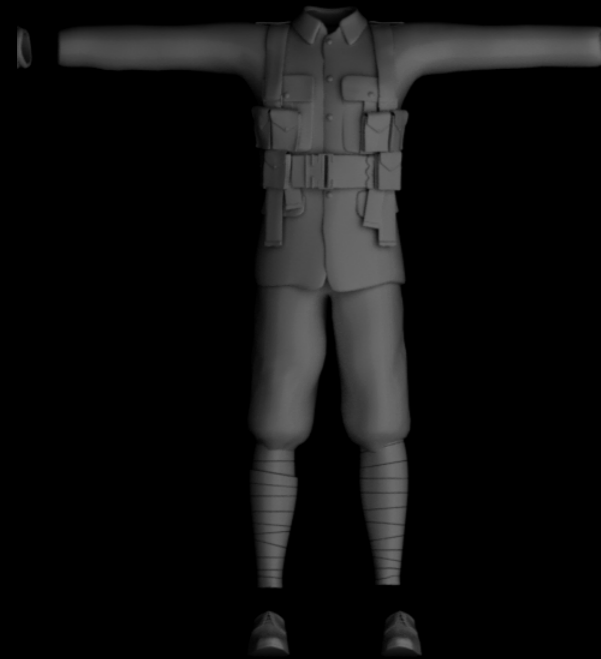


Figure 55 :Prasad, S. Pryce's Clothing Models , 2020.

Reading Book



Cooking A Meal



Reading Letter



Figure 56 :Prasad, S. Pryce Rendered Animations , 2020.

Figure 57 :Prasad, S. Diorama and Animation  
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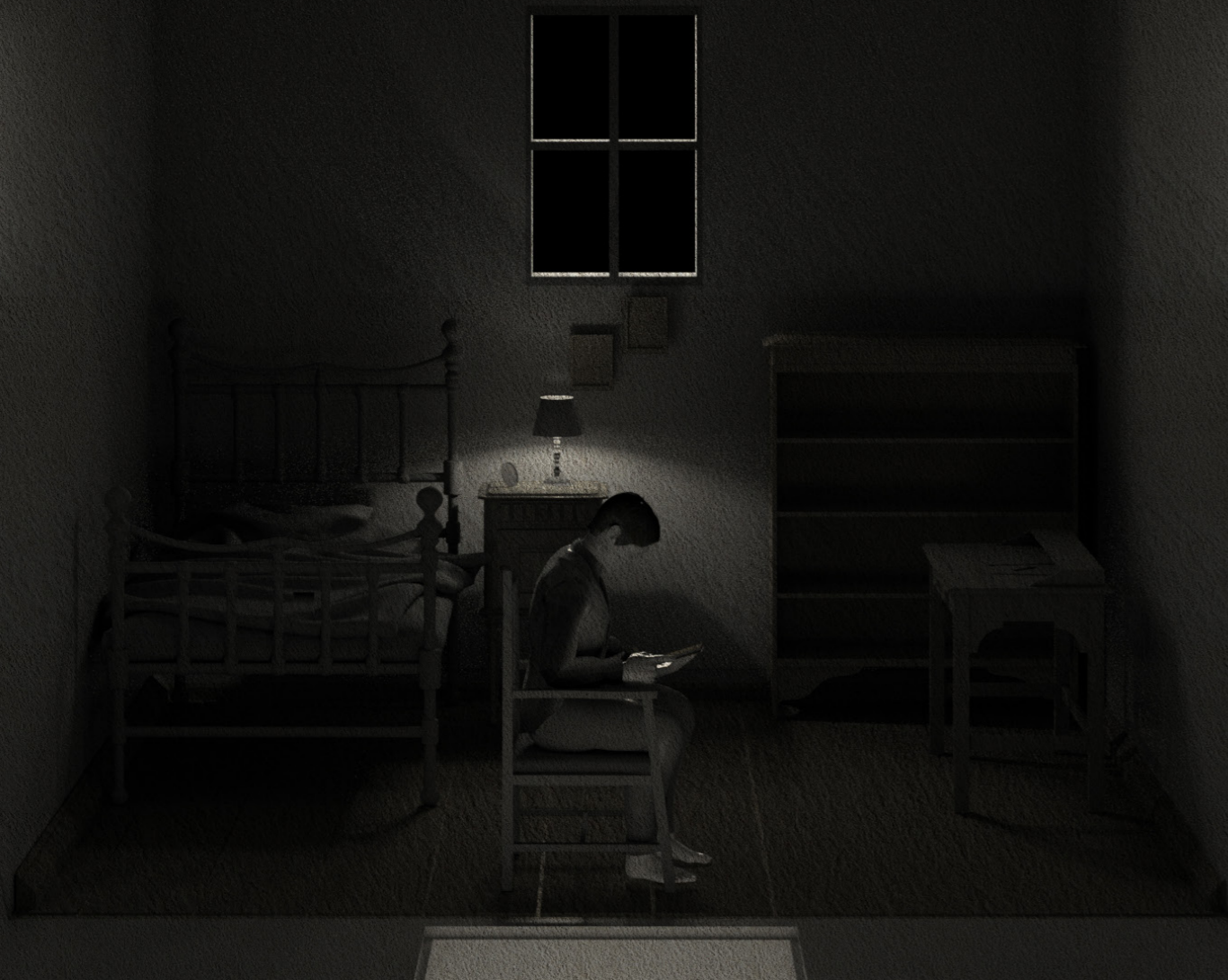


Figure 58 :Prasad, S. Diorama and Animation  
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Figure 59 :Prasad, S. Diorama and Animation  
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Figure 60 :Prasad, S. Pryce Reading Book at Home , 2020.

## The Theatre Box

My next concept iteration was similar to a curiosity cabinet that manifests the characteristic of the objects that are inside. The theatre box is the gateway between the two modes of living and dwelling, serving as a transitional object that links two different modes of time and space. For Pryce's bedroom diorama the box hybridised as a writing desk. In the Trenches of Gallipoli, the box design is a hybrid of ammo crates and storing equipment. In the Trenches of Passchendaele, the box resembles the stretcher bed and dugout shelter. All the boxes have three parts. The first part is the diorama, the second is the Peppers Ghost Illusion and the third is the drawer. I combined the illusion's digital screen and the drawer into one by dividing the drawer into two parts, the front where the archival objects are and the back where the digital screen is placed. When the audience opens the drawer, the digital screen will align with the 45-degree glass and project Pryce into the scene of the diorama. These boxes are designed specifically to the spatial location they are housing. During the experimental stages of physical making of the 1:1. I choose pine because during my investigation I learnt that during the war pine was the most accessible and most used wood in the construction of the trenches.

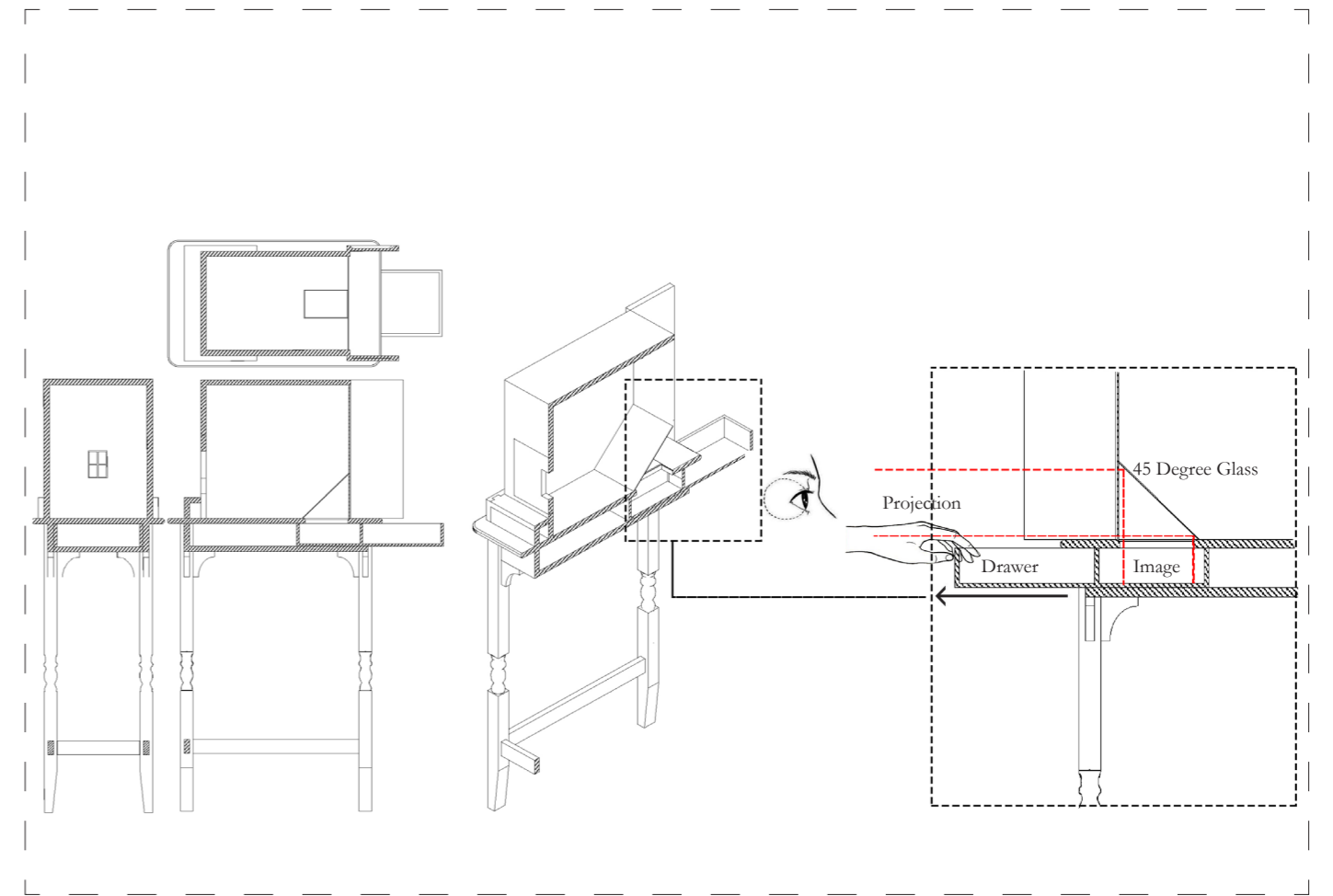


Figure 61 :Prasad, S. Plan, Section and Detail Drawing , 2020.

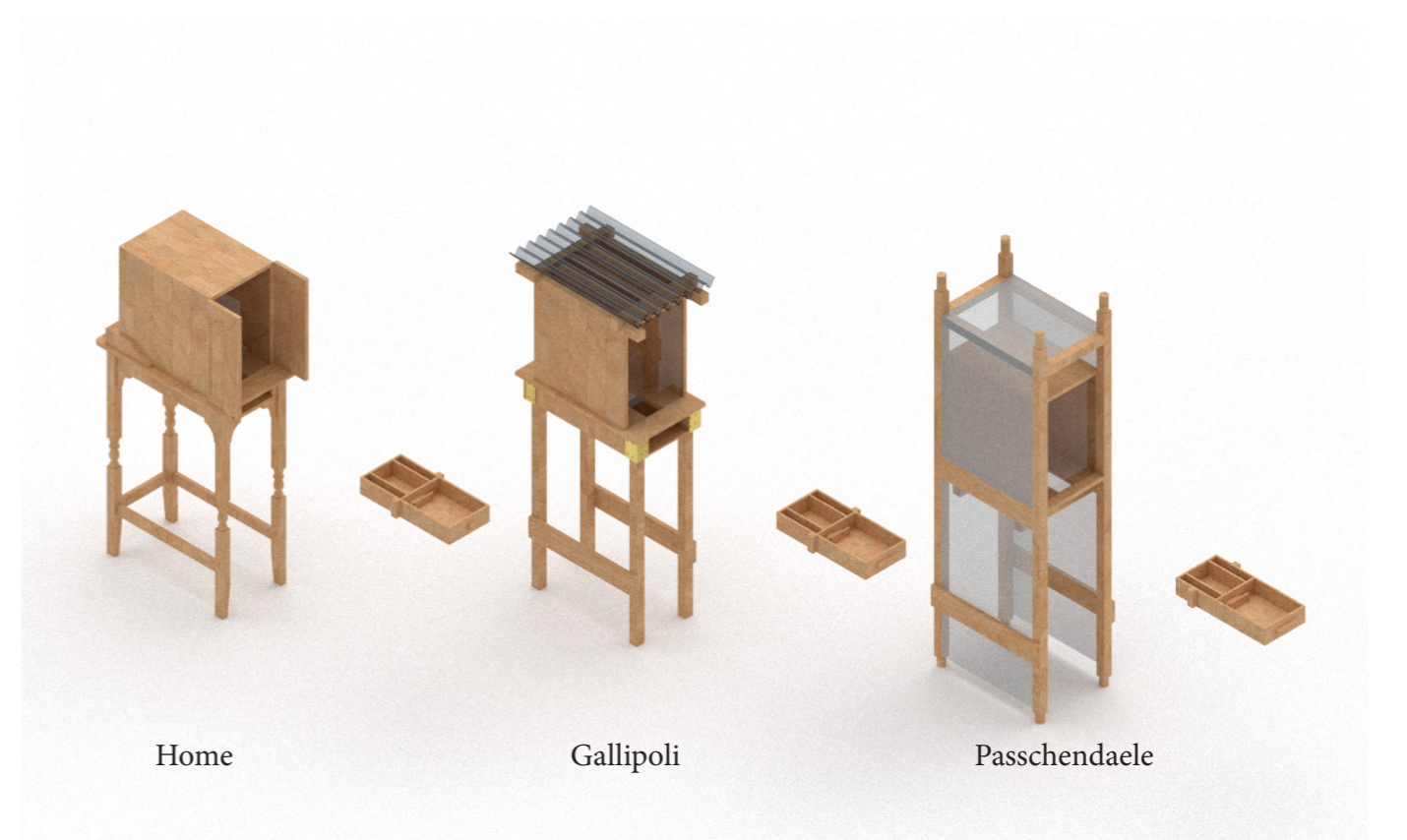


Figure 62 :Prasad, S. The Theatre Box Designs , 2020.

## The House and Outer World (Museum)

Jack Stanley Pryce was killed in action on 6th October 1918 at the age of 26 at Le Cateau, France, and was buried at Grevillers British Cemetery at Pas-de-Calais. Pryce' spent a lot of time writing and talking about home and him not making it back prompted me to create a design strategy that brings Pryce home, not physically but through the memories embedded with his letters and parcels. Eighteen thousand New Zealanders didn't make it home, so I decided that the design needed to be uniform to represent the concept of the collective.

In traditional theatre, the actors cross the threshold of the proscenium arch (in-between space) from the real private space to the public spaces of the stage and the outer world. The audiences cross the threshold from the outer world to the in the inner world of the narrative performance at play, moving from the public domain to the private. In relation to my project so far, If you think of the diorama as the object of memory (the private space) , and the box as the chest where the memory is conserved, then the last element would be the 'house' where the chest is stored. The deepness of space is where space moves in an inward direction where we transverse through all dimensions of architecture <sup>45</sup>. By house, I specifically don't mean a traditional house rather an abstracted representation of domestic space or a shelter that separates the inner world (diorama) from the outer world. Where place may also be conceptualised as a temporary spatial heterotopia ( a place of many places) and a site that is both outside the concept of time that results in creating an illusion of transcendence that is grounded and real<sup>46</sup>. Where the role of the monument isn't only to be a mnemonic tangible object of recollection but also a imagined space of absent narratives, individuals and places<sup>47</sup>. The house, therefore becomes a monument and symbol of the collective. For the design of the house, I combined the concept of the proscenium arch with element of a monument, like the cenotaph. Which results in an intergration of theatre with memorials.

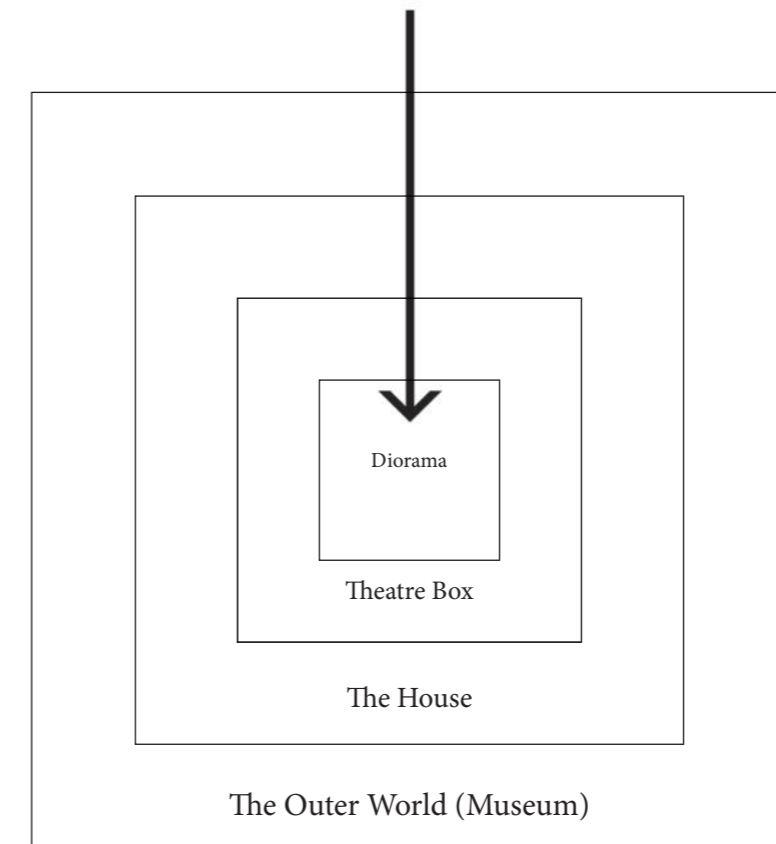


Figure 63 : Prasad,S .Concept Drawing of Place of Places/ Space within space , 2020.

Each spatial location that Pryce' inhabits as a home for whatever duration of time, is a memorial and a spatial monument of him. Which means each house has an iteration of Pryce's domestic space( Diorama and Theatre Box).

In this proposal Pryce' has four houses as I only focus on a single story but let's say there were stories of many others. As the space of Pou Kanohi can only fit nine of these House structures according to my dimension and 3D model of the space that I made in Rhinoceros. Each one can host the stories of a different individual that can equate to 9 different experiences and struggles or focus on 9 different themes. It can even be a cycle, where after a certain duration the stories rotate and focuses on someone else. Or the alternative approach could be that these structures aren't necessarily in one room but be space throughout the museum.

The next series of figures showcases the implementation of the diorama, the theatre box and the house in relation to the museum. (Figures 64-71)

45. J. D. Dickson, Auckland University of, and Architecture School of, *The Mastery of Space* (Auckland, N.Z.: University of Auckland, School of Architecture, 1982).

46. Connor, Andrea. *The Political Afterlife of Sites of Monumental Destruction : Reconstructing Affect in Mostar and New York*. Interventions: Routledge, 2017.

47. Ibid

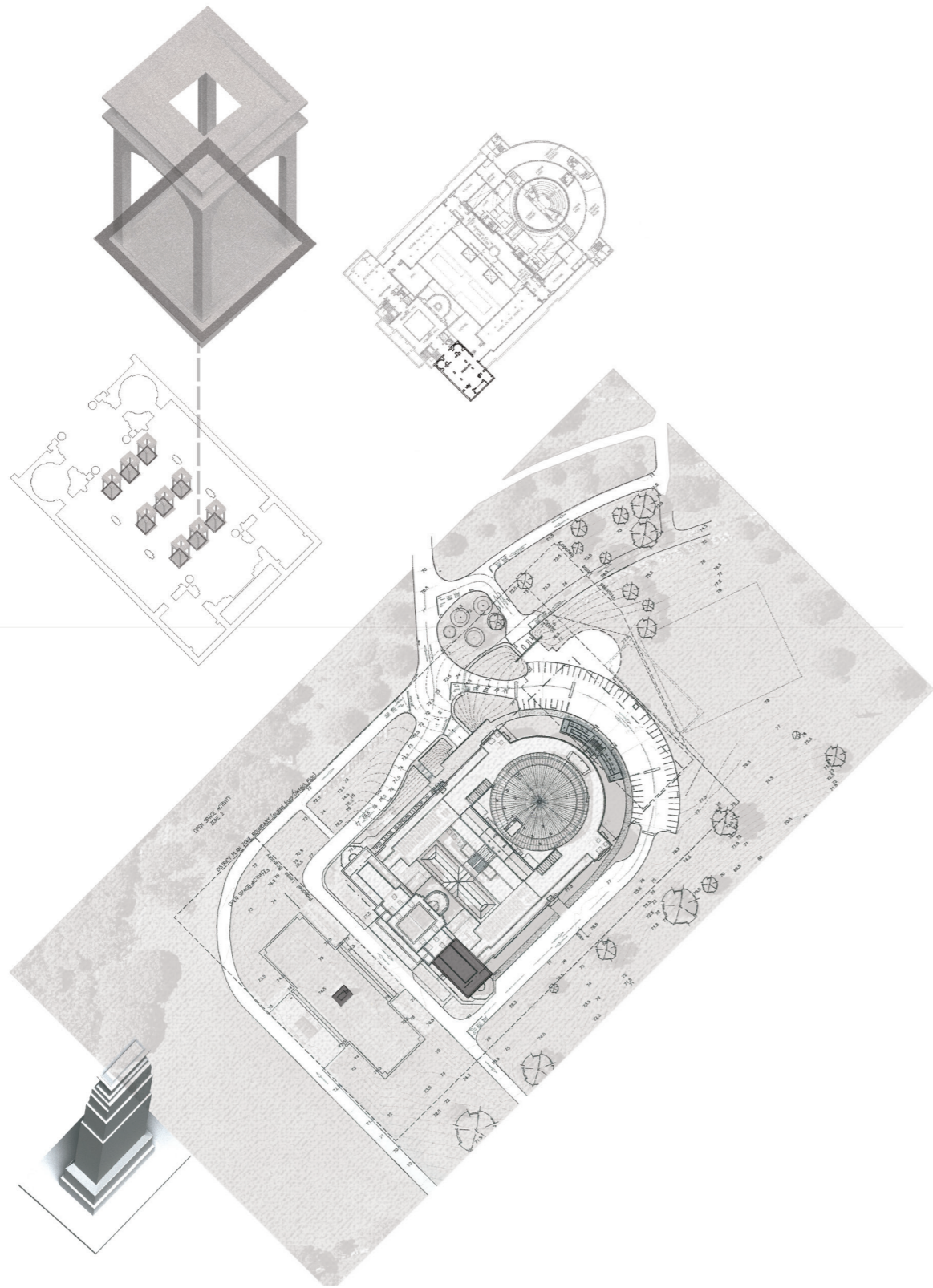


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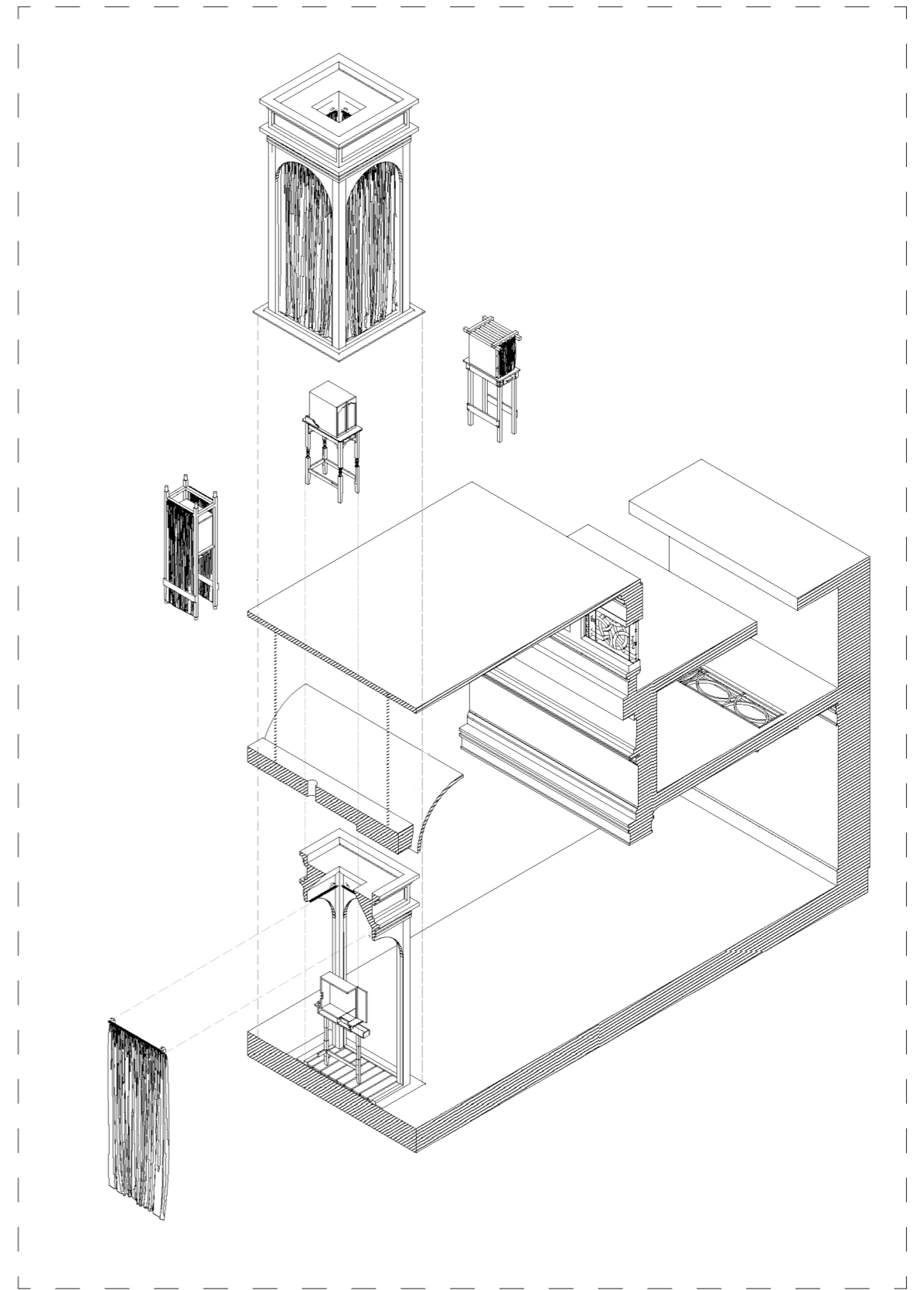


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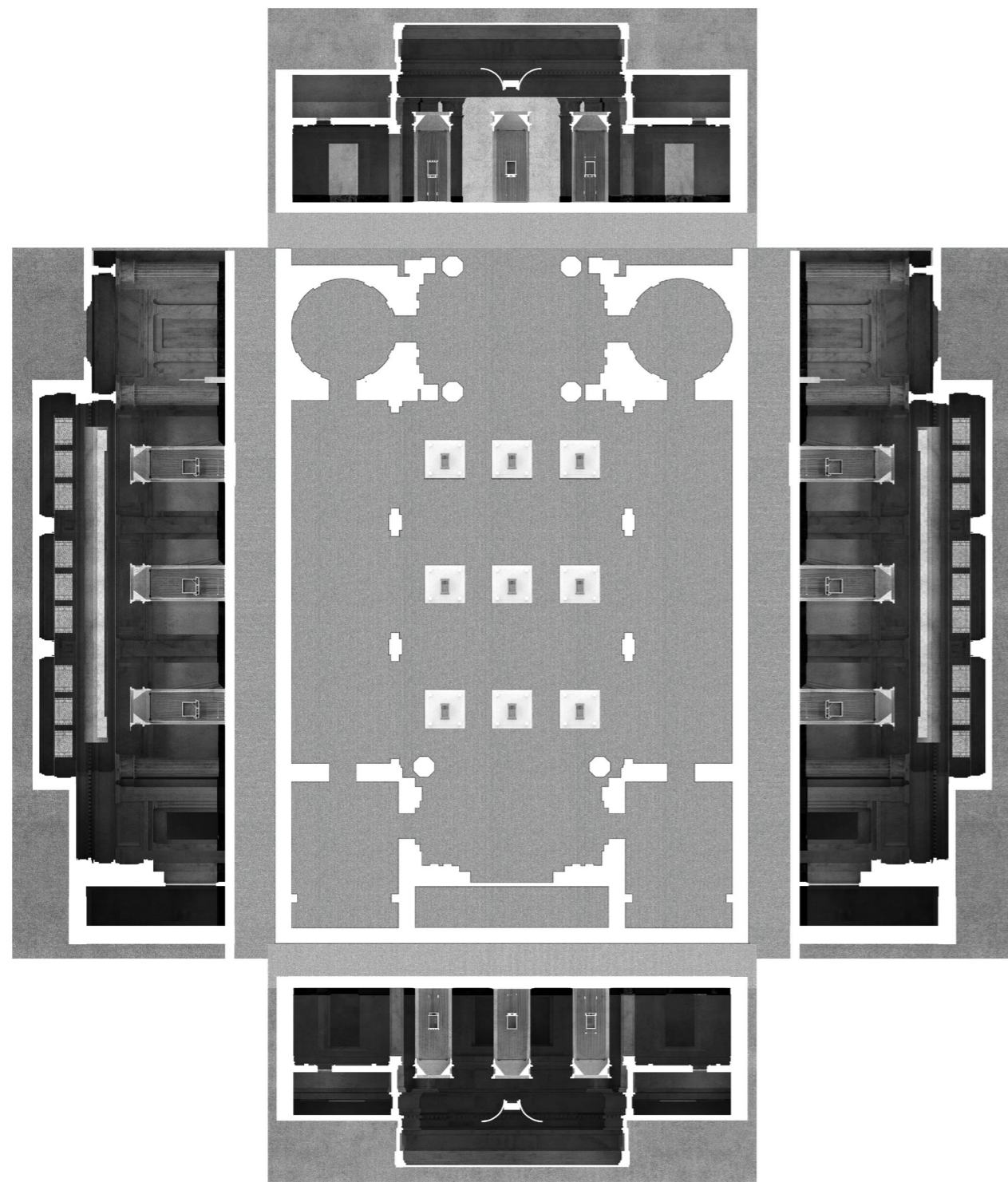


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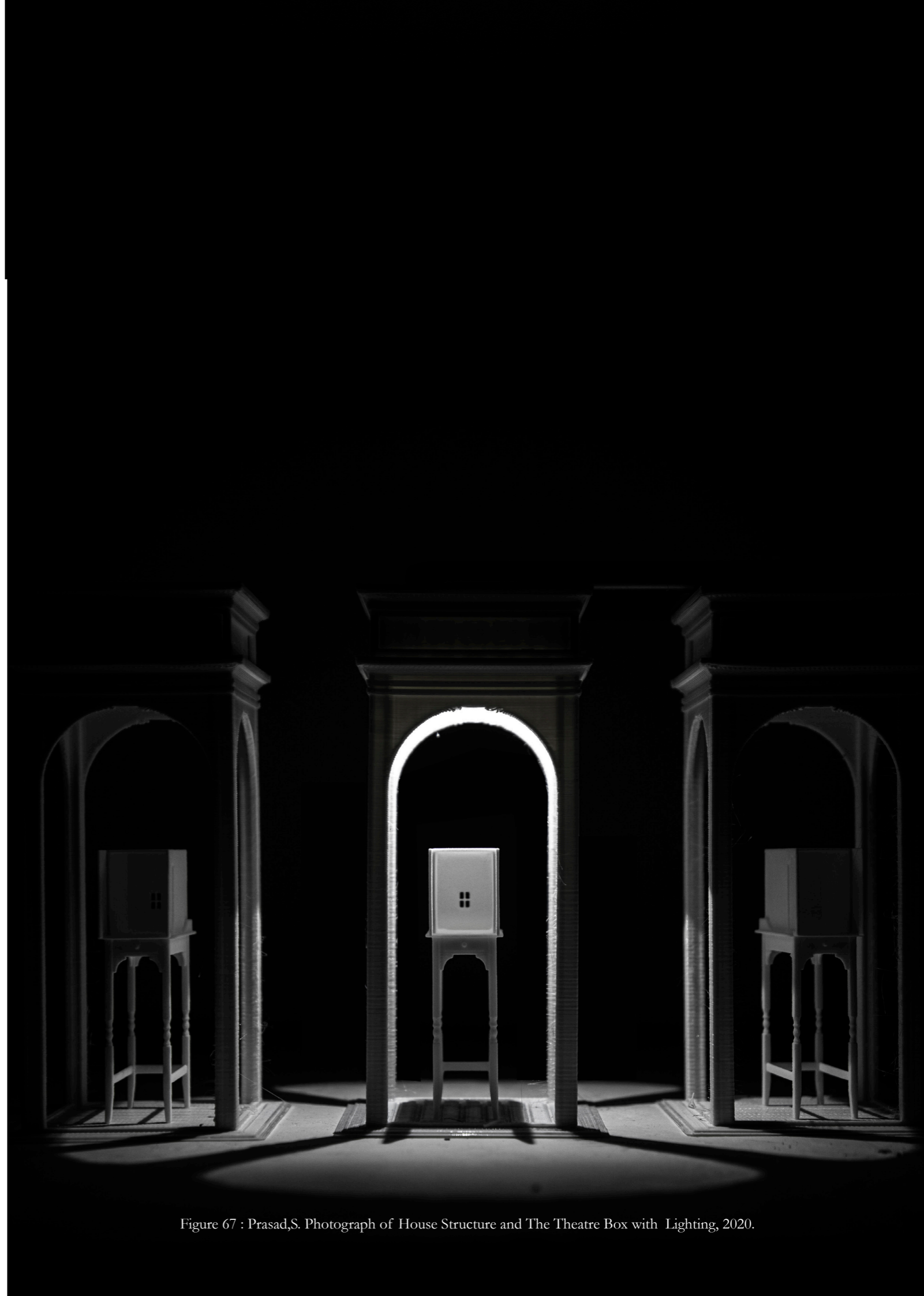


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## **To Send**

## **Conclusion**

To many soldiers, like Jack Stanley Pryce, home wasn't just a physical space, it was an ethereal space that could never be destroyed nor forgotten. Even when they left home, home never left them; home became a part of who they were. Home is and will always be place of memory, a place of stories and a space of family. With the help of my practice, I have proposed an exhibition design that incorporates critical engagement with digital and analogue methods alongside archival research to produce a series of miniature memorials that push the boundaries of War narratives both visually but also reconceptualises the role and foundations of memorials .

## Installation

The following images showcases the conceptual framework being realised fully with the diorama, animation and cabinets in relation to Pryce's letters. Originally, my intentions were to showcase all of the artefacts and items I had made throughout the course of my research. Instead I decided to approach the exhibition as if it was being placed within the Museum. Only putting in elements that were necessary for the audience to understand, experience and read the narrative on display. During the early stages of the install, I placed and hung the white sheer fabric in front of the cabinet pieces as a threshold between the interiority of the House and the outer world as shown in my renders (Figure 69-71). When going through the fabric physically it didn't seem to work as well as I thought it would have, therefore I decided to take it out entirely. I believe that the fabric threshold would've worked much better with the structure of the house rather than directly being hung from the ceiling. At the entrance of the exhibition, I placed a plinth onto which I had miniature versions of the cabinet pieces and the house structure and opposite it were the 1:1 scale versions of the cabinets itself.

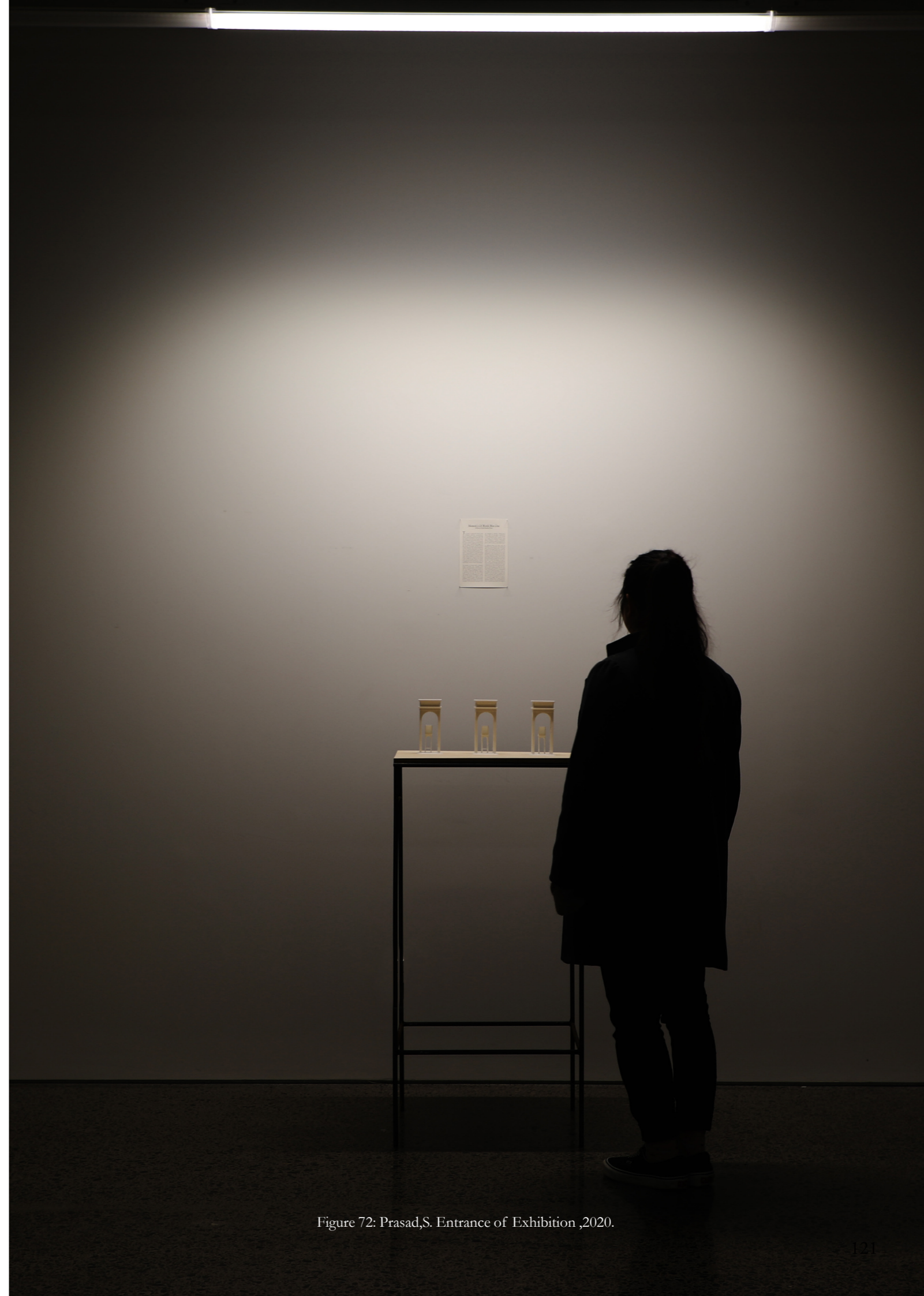


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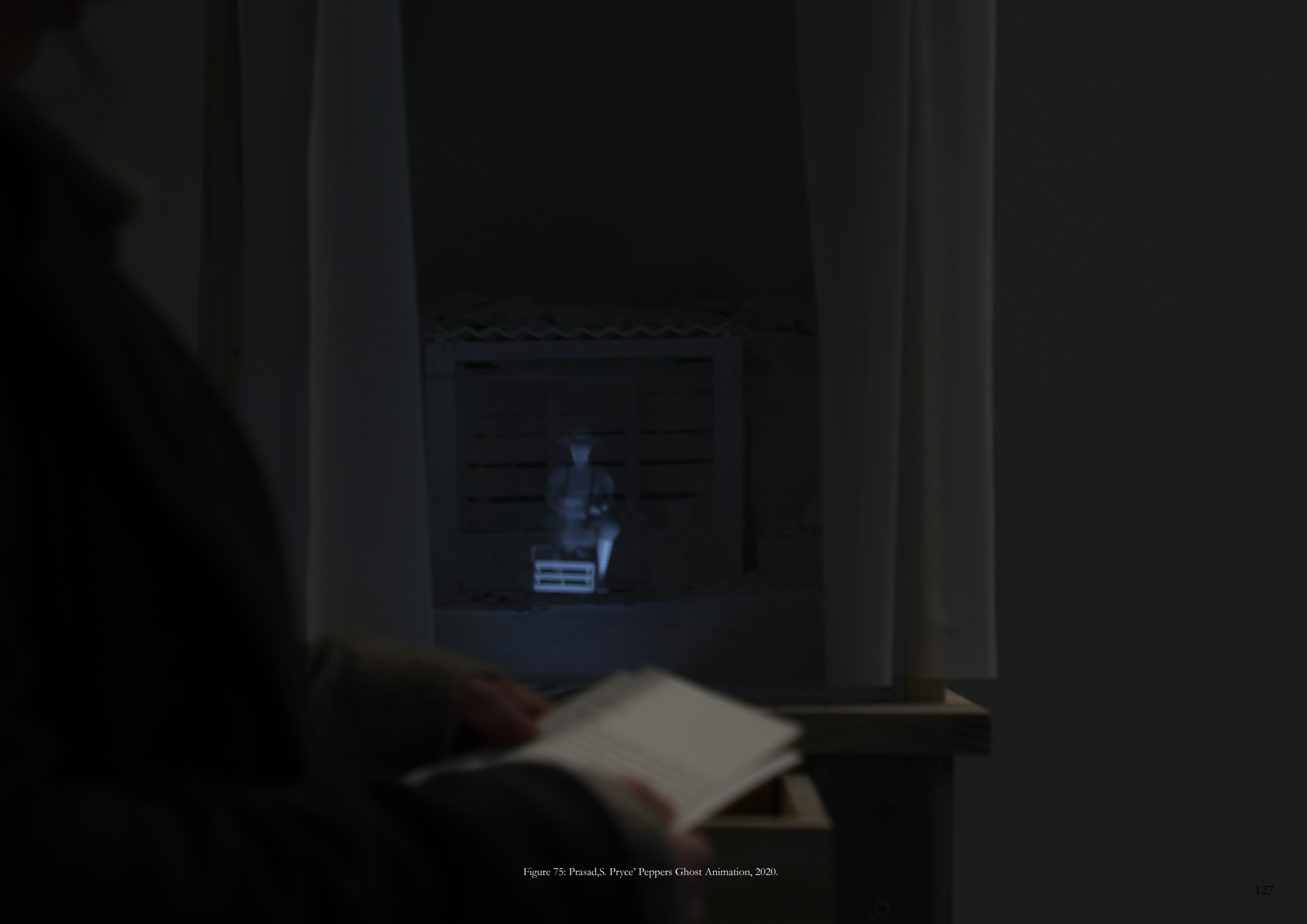


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